Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

Monday, September 6, 2004
Volume 40—Number 36
Pages 1713–1817

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Editor's Note: The President was in Cedar Rapids, IA, on September 3, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for $80.00 per year ($137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for $93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is $3.00 ($3.75 for foreign mailing).

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Week Ending Friday, September 3, 2004

Remarks to Journalists in Miami, Florida

August 27, 2004

Hurricane Charley

I have just been briefed by Mike Brown here at FEMA about the progress that the Federal Government, in working with the State government, is making toward helping these poor people who got hurt by Hurricane Charley and Tropical Storm Bonnie.

When I came down here a while ago, I said that—I promised that there would be a full-scale Federal focus on helping the State of Florida. And I tasked Mike Brown to make sure that that happened, and he has done a great job. I appreciate you serving the people of this State.

And Jeb has done a fine job too. He is—he understands that a Governor must lead, and he had led. And he has helped focus resources on helping these people that need help.

There is further work to be done here in Florida. Chairman Bill Young is with us. We have been discussing the need for a supplemental fund, supplemental funding request of the Congress for $2 billion to help continue to rebuild Florida. The Chairman and I had a good discussion on this issue. He knows Florida well. He knows the west coast of Florida really well. And as importantly, he knows how the Congress works well. And he said as soon as they get back, they'll take this matter up. This money will help for cleanup and housing and other services, small-business loans that are provided through FEMA.

As well, we're concerned about the citrus growers here in Florida, the nursery men and women in the State of Florida. We think there is ample money in the agricultural budgets to handle the damage done by Charley to the citrus industry and the nursery industry and the vegetable industry. If not, we'll work with the Chairman to provide money at the Federal level to help this State rebuild.

The main thing that's happened here in Florida is the people have responded. I want to thank the Red Cross for being at the table here. The Red Cross is always first on the scene to provide compassion and love. Senator Miller used to be a Governor, and he spent time at disasters. And as Governor of Texas I have too, and Jeb obviously has, and as President I've been there too. And always, the Red Cross led the army of compassion at the sites. And the people of Florida have responded really well, provided compassion and decency and care.

I also want to thank the power companies from the Southeast that have responded. It's amazing how much electricity has been restored. We're down to, here in this State, less than 20,000 people—I think it is, isn't it, Mike—that are looking for electricity. Heck, the last time I was here, it was 1.7 million people that didn't have electricity. And a lot of the reason why the electricity has been restored is, not only have the Florida power companies responded, but the power companies from around the Southeast have responded.

What I'm saying is, is that these disasters cause a lot of harm and grief, but they also bring out the best in our citizenry. And there's a lot of compassion for the people whose lives have been turned upside down. And I want to thank those here in Florida and around this part of the world for providing that help.

Again, Jeb, good job, and same to you, Mike. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:36 p.m. at Fire Station Number Two. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Senator Zell Miller of Georgia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks in Miami

August 27, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. *Vamos a ganar en Noviembre.* Thanks for coming. I like a line of work where you get introduced by your wife. I love her dearly. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she is a terrific First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you need to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Listen, Laura and I are thrilled to be here with our friend Zell Miller from Georgia. He is—I've asked him to give a big speech next week. He's the keynote speaker for our convention. I asked him because he puts his country above partisan politics. I asked him because he's a man of—he's got a great heart, and he cares about people from all walks of life. I picked the right guy to give a big speech for us next Wednesday night.

I'm sorry my brother is not here, *mi hermanito.* He's working. He's doing what the people of Florida expect him to do, and that is to do his job. I just saw him, and we were talking about the damage done by Hurricane Charley and the response by the Federal Government and the State government, which has been swift and sure. We're helping the people that need help on the west coast and throughout the interior of your State. We're doing our jobs as public servants.

I was just talking to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He was with us. He happens to be from Florida as well, Chairman Young, and we both agreed we'll provide the money necessary to help people with their housing and small-business loans and Government assistance as well to help the citrus growers and vegetable growers and nursery men and women who've been hurt by this storm. I want to thank them for their hard work.

I appreciate Congressman Mark Foley who's with us today—Congressman Foley. I want to thank my friend Mario Diaz-Balart, who's with us today. Mario—*bienvenidos,* Mario.

I want to appreciate David Dermer, who happens to be the mayor of Miami Beach. I appreciate him being here. Mr. Mayor, *gracias por su apoyo. Su apoyo es muy importante.*

I appreciate my friend Lynn Swann. He's the head of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, and he is an—he sets an important message: Exercise. [*Laughter*] Take care of your bodies. Get out and move around. He just warned me, he forgot to tell me what it means to fall off a mountain bike. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud of my friendship with Lynn. I want to thank him.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people who are participating in the political process. We have a duty in this country to vote. See, we have a duty in a free country to go to the polls. I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors to vote. See, reach out to people from all walks of life. You can find Republicans who need to register. You'll find some discerning independents who need to register. You can find some Democrats just like Zell who need to register. And get them to the poll and remind them that if they're interested in this country being safer, stronger, and better, put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Now, I want to thank you for what you have done. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is to turn out that vote. When we're coming down the stretch, get your friends and neighbors to the polls and remind them that we've been through a lot together during the past years and we've accomplished a lot. But there's only one reason to look backward, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to tell you, I'm ready to lead this country for 4 more years. I've got an agenda.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have more to do. We have more to do to make sure our public schools are the centers of excellence we know they all can be. You might remember what it was like 3½ years ago. We had a system that just shuffled the children through, grade after grade, year after year, without them learning the basics. We came to Washington to challenge that system. Listen, we provided more Federal funding to help the schools down here, but we now expect results. We're

challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We believe in accountability. We're helping kids early, before it's too late.

We're making progress. And at my speech next week, I'm going to talk about how to continue to build on the foundation of excellence we laid. We want more high school kids taking math and sciences so they can compete in the 21st century. We're going to have problems—we'll be solving problems early so every child has a chance to succeed. We want to make sure a high school diploma means something. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will have the skills and confidence necessary to compete in the 21st century.

There's more work to be done to make sure health care is available and affordable. I know some seniors in this State have heard that old Medicare debate campaign after campaign after campaign, and nothing ever got done. The system needed to be changed to help our seniors. I went to Washington with an idea and a plan to strengthen Medicare for our seniors, and we got the job done.

We've not only helped our seniors, we've helped low-income Americans by expanding community health centers all across our country. We provided health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. But there's more to be done. Listen, I fully understand most new jobs in this country are created by small businesses. Most small businesses are having trouble—many small businesses are having trouble affording health insurance for their employees. It seems to make sense to me to allow small businesses to join together to purchase insurance at the rate, the discounts that big companies are able to do.

There is more work to be done in order to make sure health care is available and affordable here in south Florida. We need to stop those junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine.

Audience member. Kerry won't do it.

The President. Right. See, I don't think you can be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice. He put him on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm standing with the patients and docs and hospitals for medical liability reform. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure the health decisions are made by patients and doctors, and not by Government bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

We've got more to do to keep this economy growing. Remind your friends and neighbors what this—what we've been through. We've been through a recession. We've been through an attack. We've been through corporate scandals. And yet, we've overcome these obstacles. You know why? We've got the best workers in the world. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great entrepreneurs in America. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The small-business sector of our economy is doing well. We've overcome these obstacles because of our farmers and ranchers. We've also overcome these obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

You might remember that we—our theory was, if you pay taxes, you get relief. We didn't try to pick or choose winners. We reduced the rates of everybody. We also increased the child credit. If you're a mom or dad, we wanted to help you out. We reduced the marriage penalty. See, we believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage. We helped our small businesses.

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, America has added about 1.5 million new jobs over the last 12 months. Because we acted, the national unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent, below the national average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Because we acted, the unemployment rate in the State of Florida is 4.4 percent.

Listen, there's more work to be done to keep this economy growing. To keep jobs here in America, we need to reduce the regulatory burden on the employers of America. We need tort reform so that small businesses are able to keep their doors open. We need to make sure that trade around the world is fair. We just want countries to treat us like we treat them, because we can compete with

anybody, anytime, anywhere when the rules are fair.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. In order to make sure we have jobs here in America and the economy continues to grow, we need an energy plan. I submitted a plan to the Congress 2 years ago. It's a plan that encourages conservation and encourages renewable sources of energy. It encourages exploration for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. It encourages clean coal technology. What it says is in order to grow this economy, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure this economy continues to grow and people can find work here at home, we need to be wise about how we spend your money and we need to keep your taxes low. I'm running against a fellow—he's already made over $2 trillion worth of promises. [*Laughter*] And we're just coming down the stretch. We have 2 more months to go. Imagine what it's going to be like. And so they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" And he put out that same old, tired slogan, "Oh, I'm going to pay for it by taxing the rich."

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. But you've heard that before, haven't you?

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. You know how the system works. They say they're going to tax the rich, but they hire lawyers and accountants, and then you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you because I'm going to win.

We have more to do. We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we've changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers in cells around the world, including the United States. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Over 10 million people in that country have registered to vote. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, many young girls now go to school for the first time in their lives. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and clear message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was the source of great instability in a world's volatile region, and so, I saw a threat.

One of the lessons of September the 11th that we must never forget is that this Nation must deal with threats before they fully materialize. It's an important lesson. So with that in mind, I went to the United States Congress—I went to the Congress. I said, "I see a threat. My administration sees a threat." They looked at the same intelligence I did. They remembered the same history of the dictator, and they saw a threat, including my opponent. He saw a threat. He saw a threat and, along with many, authorized the use of force.

Committing our troops into combat is the last choice of a President—it must be the last choice, so I went to the United Nations. And I said, "We see a threat." They looked at the intelligence. They remembered the history, and they saw a threat. Remember, they passed a resolution 15 to nothing that said, "Saddam Hussein, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences."

But as he had for over a decade, he refused to comply with the demands of the free world. He chose defiance once again. As a matter of fact, when we tried to send inspectors into the country, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make. The choice was: Do I trust a madman

and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take actions to defend America? I will defend America every time.

Even though we did not find the stockpiles we expected to find, Saddam had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to others, including our enemy. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

I'm running because I understand we have more to do to defend this country. It's the most solemn duty of Government, is to defend the American people. So we'll continue to work with our friends and allies to aggressively pursue these terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. You cannot talk sense to these people. You can't rationalize with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them and defeat them around the world so we do not face them here at home.

We will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. See, we put together a strong coalition. Nearly 40 nations are involved in Afghanistan. Some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. We will continue to work with our alliances and our friends for the sake of freedom and peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We will keep our commitments to help Afghanistan and Iraq become peaceful democratic societies. That's what we're going to do. You see, these two nations are now governed by strong leaders. They're on the path to elections. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we've set a clear goal, peaceful and democratic countries that are allies in the war on terror. Our military forces will help them meet that goal by training Afghan and Iraqi forces so they can defend their own countries. Our military will complete—*un momento*—we will complete our mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

Our commitments are being kept by a fantastic military. I am so proud——

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. At bases across the country and around the world, I've seen the great decency and the unselfish courage of our service men and women. I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I made a commitment to our troops and to the loved ones of our troops that they will have the resources they need to fight and win the war on terror. That's why last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their mission. This was legislation that provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, for hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. This was necessary funding. We received great bipartisan support. In the Senate, matter of fact, the bipartisan support was so strong only 12 Members voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Two of those twelve Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He said—they asked him, they said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it." *"Voto si, y despues voto no." Muy claro.* [*Laughter*]

And so they said, "Well, wait a minute." And they kept pressing. And he said, "Well, I was proud of the vote." And then finally he said, "It's just a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in their neighborhood. See, we believe in America that free countries do not export terror; free countries do not stifle the dreams of their citizens.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and that makes America more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're spreading the peace that we all long for. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of our national soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world.

Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

And over the next 4 years, I will continue to work to ensure that gift of freedom reaches the men and women of Cuba. Last weekend, we're continuing to implement our strategy of *la verdad*, the truth. We took action to continue breaking the dictator's information blockade. We launched the first of what will be regular airborne broadcasts into Cuba. We will continue those broadcasts. The Cuban people are hearing the truth once again.

I believe and strongly believe the people of Cuba should be free from the tyrant. And I believe that enforcing the embargo is a necessary part of that strategy. My opponent has a different approach. Last year, after Castro launched a brutal crackdown on dissidents, my opponent responded by voting to reward the dictator by lifting the tourism travel ban.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He even criticized some of the dissidents. He said their efforts to promote democracy were counterproductive.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And he said they had brought down the hammer on themselves.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. *Sus palabra.* A few years earlier in 2000, he said the only reason we don't change the embargo is because of the politics of Florida.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now he's changing his tune. Earlier this year, he came down here, and he explained his position on the Helms-Burton law. It's a tough measure that has succeeded in denying hard currency into Cuba to the Castro regime so he can exploit the people. He said, and I quote, "I voted for the Helms-Burton legislation," end quote. That's what he said. But there's one problem. He voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. To clear things up, his campaign said that while he did vote against final passage, he had voted for it months earlier.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. In other words, he voted for it before he voted against it. *"Voto si, y despues voto no."*

When I say something, I mean it. We will not rest until the Cuban people enjoy the same freedoms in Havana that they receive here in America.

There's more work to be done to protect the homeland. We've got more work to do. I just want you to know there's a lot of really good people who are working hard and long hours to protect you, people at the Federal level, people at the State level, first-responders here at the local level. We're spending a lot of time. I appreciate the firefighters and police officers and emergency teams that are here with us today.

There's more work to be done. You know, we created the Department of Homeland Security. We're now reforming our intelligence service so we can get better intelligence and share the intelligence better to disrupt terrorist plots. We've got to do better in our ports and on our borders. We've got a lot of work to do. But I just want to warn you, reform isn't easy in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests up there. A lot of people say they like the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform. You've got to be able to get the job done.

So when you go out and work on our behalf, you tell them that when it comes to reforming our schools and raising the standards and improving the lives of our children, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms that helps our seniors and our families, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and creating quality jobs, we are getting the job done. When it comes to better securing our homeland and fighting the forces of terror and spreading peace and freedom, we're getting the job done. When it comes to a firm policy on Cuba, we're getting the job done. When it comes to electing a President, put somebody back in office who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. These are changing times we live in. These are changing times, and they're challenging times. They're exciting times as well. But in these changing times, there are—some things will never change: Our belief in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity;

our belief in the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we will honor our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. Our culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," "You got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expect of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time where we need firm resolve, clear vision, and deep belief in the values that make this country such a wonderful country.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. I was traveling with Rudy Giuliani yesterday in New Mexico, and I—it reminded me of the day we spent together, September the 14th, 2001, the day I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers, the day that, obviously, I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling, "Whatever it takes." I was walking down, thanking people, and a fellow looked me and said, "Do not let me down." This is one of these memories that have been indelibly etched in my mind. I wake up every day in this great job of mine thinking about how best to protect America. I will never relent in defending our country, whatever it takes.

We have done a lot together. We have done a lot together, and we've done a lot of hard work. We've done a lot of hard work. There's more work to be done. We will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country—I mean every corner. I want everybody, no matter where they're from, where they were raised, to be able to realize the great potential, the great dream of America. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to another generation. During the next 4 years, we will continue to lead the cause of freedom and peace.

When I campaigned in your great State 4 years ago and around our Nation, I made a pledge to my fellow Americans, if you honored me with the great responsibility of being President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. *Y con su apoyo*—and with your help, I will do so *por quatro mas años.*

Thank you all for coming. *Vamos a ganar.* Thank you all. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. at the Miami Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Fidel Castro of Cuba; and Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

August 28, 2004

Good morning. In the 3 years since our country was attacked, America has remained on the offensive against terrorist enemies wherever they hide and plot. Part of that offensive has been to reorganize our Government so that all our intelligence and law enforcement agencies cooperate effectively to expose and disrupt threats against America.

The Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11 Commission, concluded that these efforts have made America safer. They also

concluded that America is still not safe. I agree with both of those conclusions, and so my administration is taking additional actions to reform our intelligence services and improve America's ability to find, track, and stop dangerous terrorists.

This week, I signed a series of Executive orders to ensure that the people in Government responsible for defending America and countering terrorism have the best possible information and support to identify threats and to protect the homeland. Some of these orders reflect specific recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. All of them are essential to America's security as we wage the war on terror.

First, I have ordered the Director of Central Intelligence to perform the functions of the National Intelligence Director within the constraints of existing law, until Congress establishes that position. I agree with the 9/11 Commission that America needs a single official to coordinate the foreign and domestic activities of the intelligence community with authority over personnel, budgeting, and policy. I am working with Members of Congress to create this position, and while we act, the Director of Central Intelligence will play an expanded role. I also urge Congress to act swiftly on my nomination of Porter Goss, a proven reformer with decades of experience in intelligence to lead the CIA.

Second, I have ordered the establishment of a National Counterterrorism Center. This new center builds on the capabilities of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, which I created more than a year ago. The Center will become our Government's central knowledge bank for information about known and suspected terrorists and will help ensure effective joint action across the Government so that our efforts against terrorists are unified in priority and purpose. Center personnel will also prepare the daily terrorism threat report that comes to me and to senior Government officials.

Third, we're making sure that all agencies of our Government share vital threat information. I have ordered the Director of Central Intelligence to ensure that we have common standards and clear accountability measures for intelligence sharing across the agencies of our Government. I have established a new Information Systems Council to identify and break down any remaining barriers to the rapid sharing of threat information by America's intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies, and State and local governments. To continue to protect the freedoms and privacy of our citizens, I've established a Civil Liberties Board to monitor information-sharing practices.

America faces a great threat, and our Government is doing everything in its power to confront and defeat that threat. We have made great progress against the terrorists who seek to harm our Nation. We have made great progress in protecting our homeland. In all that lies ahead, America will stay focused and determined, and we will prevail.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:25 p.m. on August 27 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Troy, Ohio

August 28, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Thank you for bringing your families. Thanks for taking time out of your Saturday morning to provide such a warm welcome to somebody who is coming here to ask for your help and ask for your vote. I'm proud to be in Miami County, Ohio, today to kick off a bus tour across your important State. I'm here to say to you, I'm ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years, and I want your help.

Boehner said if you came to this part of the world, some people might show up to say hello. He was right, and I'm grateful. Thanks for being here. I'm proud to call John Boehner my friend. I know you're proud to call him Congressman. He's doing a great job on the people of this part of the world, and I appreciate serving with him.

I wish Laura were here to see the size of this crowd. She's not going to believe when I tell her how many people came. She's going to say it was just a Texas tall tale. Laura is

a great mother, a wonderful wife, a terrific First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons why I hope you put me back into office today, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. Listen, I didn't pick him because of his wavy hair. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his sound judgment, his vast experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I want to thank Governor Bob Taft for joining us today. Mr. Governor, thank you for joining me on this bus trip. We're traveling across this great State of yours, shaking as many hands as possible, looking people in the eye, and saying, "I've got a clear vision of where I want to take this country."

I want to thank Senator Mike DeWine for being on this bus trip with me today. I appreciate working with Mike and the other Senator, George Voinovich. Put George back in there for 6 years. You need him in the State of Ohio. Mike wisely brought his wife, Fran, and daughter, Anna. I'm proud to be traveling with them as well.

I want to thank Secretary of State Ken Blackwell for joining us today.

Mr. Mayor is with us. Mr. Mayor, His Honor, Mike Beamish, is with us. Mr. Mayor, thank you for your hospitality. I appreciate you letting us use this fantastic town square. Such a beautiful sight, made more beautiful by the fact that a lot of your citizens have come here today. My only advice, Mr. Mayor, is make sure you fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Don McLaurin, the mayor of Trotwood, Ohio, for being here. I want to thank all the local officials. I want to thank the Troy High Marching Band for being here today.

Today when we landed in Dayton, I met Becky Brown. [*Applause*] She brought some of her cousins with her. [*Laughter*] Becky is the one millionth person to sign up as a volunteer in the Bush-Cheney '04 effort. That means she's willing to put up signs and willing to get on the phone and willing to work and turn out the vote.

See, we have a duty in our country to vote. We have an obligation to participate in the political process. So I'm here to thank all of you all who are involved in the grassroots efforts here in Ohio. I want to thank you for going to your community centers and your places of worship and where you work and saying to your friends and neighbors, "Register to vote." It's important you do so. And then after you get them registered, remind them to vote. And as they start heading to the polls, tell them if they want an administration that's going to make this country safer, stronger, and better, put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Listen, we have done a lot in this country. We've accomplished a great deal.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have been through a lot together. And we've accomplished a lot. But there's only one reason to look backward, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to tell you that all—we've done a lot. We have more to do. We have more to do to make this country a more secure country. We have more to do to spread the peace. We have more to do to make America a hopeful place for every single citizen.

And that starts with making sure our public schools are the centers of excellence we know they can be. John Boehner mentioned the No Child Left Behind Act. I want to take you back 3½ years ago to a system that simply moved children through, year after year, grade after grade, without teaching the basics. So we challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations. We raised the bar, because we know every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract. We expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract. We increased Federal funding, but we increased local control of schools and accountability across America so not one child is left behind in this country.

We're making progress. We're closing the achievement gap in America, but there's more to do. We want to make sure math and sciences are emphasized in our high schools, so our youngsters can be able to participate in the jobs of the 21st century. We're going to expand the Internet in the classrooms. We're going to make sure there's early intervention programs available so kids don't slip behind. We're going to make sure that a high

school diploma means something over the next 4 years. What I'm telling you is, 4 more years of this administration will help a rising generation earn the skills and confidence necessary to compete in a global world.

We have more to do to make health care available and affordable. When we came to office, you might remember all those political campaigns: "Give us a chance. We'll fix Medicare for our seniors. We'll make sure the system is strengthened and modern." But nothing ever got done. We got the job done for the seniors of America. The Medicare system gives seniors more choices. And starting in 2006, there will be prescription drugs available for those on Medicare.

We're making progress when it comes to health care. We've expanded the number of community centers that are available for low-income Americans. We provided health savings accounts to encourage families to save, tax-free, for their own needs. When it comes to making health care more affordable and available, there is more work to be done over the next 4 years. Most people get their health care through their businesses. Most new jobs are created by small businesses. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. Therefore, in order to help American families, it makes sense to let small businesses pool together and purchase insurance at the same discount that big businesses are able to do.

We will harness technology to reduce costs and reduce error. We will continue to expand research to seek new cures for diseases. And I'll tell you what else you need to do, not only in Ohio but around the Nation, we must stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care and driving docs out of business. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-hospital and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to make your choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and patients. I am for medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, DC, bureaucrats.

We've got to make—we've got to do more to make this economy stronger. Listen, I understand there's places here in Ohio that are lagging behind the national recovery. We will continue to work to create an environment for jobs to grow so people can find work. But I want to remind you, we've been through a lot in this country. We've been through a recession and corporate scandals and an attack on our country. Yet, we're overcoming these obstacles. We're overcoming these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. We're overcoming these obstacles because America's farmers and ranchers know what they're doing. We're coming over—we're overcoming these obstacles because we've got the greatest workers in the world in this country. And I think we're overcoming these obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

You might remember that tax relief. We said, "If we're going to provide tax relief, everybody who pays taxes gets relief." We're not going to play politics with your wallet. We raised the child credit to help moms and dads with raising their children. We reduced the marriage penalty. I believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We're helping our small businesses, and it's working. Our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.5 million new jobs over the past 12 months. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent, which is lower than the national average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s.

We're headed in the right direction, but there's more work to be done. In order to keep jobs here in America, this Nation needs an energy policy. We need to encourage conservation. We need to encourage alternative uses of energy. But we need to be using Ohio coal and Ohio natural gas to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure jobs stay here in Ohio and America, we're going to make sure countries treat us the way we treat them when it comes to trade. Our markets are open. They need to open up their markets because American workers can compete with anybody, anyplace, anytime in this world.

We need to get rid of these junk lawsuits that are threatening small businesses all across America. We need to make sure our regulatory system is reasonable and fair. In

order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to make sure American workers gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century, which means we will continue to use our community college systems as a place for people to receive a lifetime of learning in America.

And finally, to make sure this economy grows and jobs stay here in America, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money. And we've got to keep your taxes low. [*Applause*] Yes. We have a difference of opinion in this race. I'm running against a fellow who has already promised over $2 trillion of new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And there's still September and October to go. [*Laughter*] He's got plenty of time to go out there and make more promises. They said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, I'm going to tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? Every time they say "tax the rich," the rich dodge and you pay. But we're not going to let him. We're going to beat him in November of this year.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm running because I know we have more to do to wage and win the war against the terrorists. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up cells around the world, including the United States. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. You realize, over 10 million people have registered to vote in the Presidential elections coming this fall in Afghanistan. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in that country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing missiles at American pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region.

I saw a threat. One of the important lessons of September the 11th that this Nation must never forget is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. I went to the United States Congress. I said, "I see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence I had looked at. They looked at the same history of Saddam Hussein and came to the same conclusion, as they authorized the use of force. Republicans and Democrats alike saw a threat, including my opponent.

I then went to the United Nations. Before a President is to commit force, we must try all means necessary to solve a threat peacefully. So I went to the United Nations. I said, "We see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence, and as they had for over a decade, they concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat. The U.N. Security Council voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." As he had for over a decade, he refused to comply with the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, he systematically deceived the inspectors that were sent into his country.

So I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Even though we did not find the stockpiles we expected to find, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to the enemy. That was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. See, after months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, he now agrees with me that even though we did not find the stockpiles we thought we would find, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank him for clearing that up. However, I warn you that there's still a little more than 60 days left in the campaign for him to change his mind again. [*Laughter*]

We have more to do. I'm running because I understand that we must continue to work with our friends and allies to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people, see. You cannot negotiate with them. We can't be blind to the realities of the world and hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

We will continue to lead this world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a vast coalition of like-minded nations, who are working to secure our people and to spread the peace. We've got nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 involved in Iraq, over 60 involved in a Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict technology and supplies to potentially build weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to work and build our alliances over the next 4 years. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We will keep our commitments to Afghanistan and Iraq so that they become peaceful, democratic societies. It's in our interests that they become peaceful and democratic societies. These countries are now governed by two strong leaders, leaders who have set their countries on the path to elections.

We have a clear goal in Afghanistan and Iraq. We want a peaceful and democratic country to emerge that are allies in the war on terror. Our military forces will help meet that goal by not only providing security for a political process to develop but by helping to train Afghans and Iraqis so they get to defeat those who want to stop the march of freedom in their own countries. We will complete this mission as quickly as possible, so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

And I'm proud of our military. They're doing the hard work of freedom and peace. I want to thank all the veterans who are here today for setting such a fine example for those who wear the uniform.

I have made a commitment to those who wear our uniform and to their loved ones that they will have the resources they need to fight and win the war against the terrorists. We are meeting that commitment in Washington, DC. Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This legislation provided money for body armor, vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, and fuel and spare parts. It was necessary. It was an important piece of legislation. We received great bipartisan support. So strong was the bipartisan support that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against this vital funding, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they said, "Why did you make that vote?" He said, "I actually voted for the $87 billion, right before I voted against it." I suspect you don't find a lot of people right here in the town square in Troy, Ohio, who talk like that. They then pressed him, and they said, "Don't you have another explanation?" He said, well, he's proud of the vote, and then he finally said, "It's just a complicated matter." There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In our long run—in the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will serve as powerful examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. Free countries make the world a more peaceful place.

By serving the cause of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and that makes America more secure. By serving the cause of liberty, we're making the world a more peaceful place. By serving the cause of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of our own country. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We've got more work to do to protect this homeland. I see firefighters and police officers who are here with us today. I want to thank the first-responders for their hard work. You need to know that cooperation at the Federal level and State level and local level has vastly improved since September the 11th, and it needs to be. There's an enemy that lurks and still hates us. We have more work to do. Yesterday I announced further reforms of intelligence-gathering systems to make sure that we get the best information so we can respond to threat to our country. It is essential that Congress renew the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act gives our law enforcement vital tools to break and find terrorist cells before they can affect America. No, we're working hard to secure our ports and secure our borders. There's a lot of good people working on your behalf to make this homeland more secure.

But I will warn you, reform is not easy in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests there. There's a lot of people who have spent a lifetime in Washington, and they want to defend the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform. You have to be able to get the job done.

And so when you're out campaigning on my behalf, when you're out there registering people to vote and then encouraging them to vote, remind them that when it comes to reforming schools so we can increase excellence in every classroom in America, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care for our seniors and for American families, we're getting the job done. When it comes to expanding our economy, defeating the recession, we're getting the job done. When it comes to defending this homeland and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. When it comes to electing a President, reelect somebody who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We're living in a time of change. It's a time of change, and change can be unsettling. Government must recognize that and Government must stand side by side with workers and families during this time of change. See, we have a difference of philosophy in this race. I believe Government ought to help, not give orders. I believe ought to—Government ought to encourage people to realize their dreams, not dictate to people how to achieve their dreams. And there's a difference in philosophy that I intend to make and clarify across this country. And one of the ways that Government can help people during times of change is to encourage an ownership society, is to encourage people to own their own business. There's nothing better than an America for people to know that the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and alive and well.

In order to provide security during a time of change, we ought to encourage health care accounts that people own and call their own, that they can take from job to job. I see we've got a lot of younger workers here, and I want to thank you for coming. But you need to make sure you listen carefully to the debate on Social Security. Baby boomers like me are just fine when it comes to the fiscal sanity of Social Security. People just starting in the workplace better understand that we must think differently about how to strengthen Social Security. I believe the best way to do so is to make sure younger workers have the option of taking some of their own money and putting them in personal savings accounts that they can call their own.

In a changing world, when the workplace has changed, we've got to make sure our

work rules are family-friendly. That includes flex-time and comp-time to allow moms and dads to spend more quality time with their children.

In a changing world, there's nothing like owning your own home to provide hope and stability. Homeownership rates are at an all-time high in America. We will continue to promote policy that encourages that moment when somebody opens the door of their dwelling and says, "Welcome to my house." That's what we love to hear. We love to hear that phrase, "Welcome to my piece of property." When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

In a time of change, there are some things that won't change: the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence, and integrity; our belief in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. In a time of change, we will support the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations.

We believe—we stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. Listen, the culture is beginning to change from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in Troy, Ohio, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

The true strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American citizens. I'll continue to rally the armies of compassion over the next 4 years, call upon those loving souls who have heard the call to love a neighbor so that we can change America one heart, one conscience, and one soul at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. You know, there are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time where we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep belief in the values that make America a great place.

None of us will ever forget that era when—that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It is a day that I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember walking the line, thanking the firefighters and rescuers who were there, and a guy with bloodshot eyes grabbed me by the arm, stared square in my eyes, and said, "Do not let me down." Moments I will never forget. I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect America. I will never relent in defending this country, whatever it takes.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have come through much together. We have been through a lot together. We have done a lot of hard work. We're moving this country forward by extending freedom around the world and opportunity here at home. During the next 4 years, I'll continue to work to spread opportunity and ownership to every corner of the country. I want every citizen to realize the great promise of our blessed land. We will continue to work to pass the enduring values of our country on to another generation. We will lead the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made a pledge to our citizens that if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your hard work, with your help, I will do so for the next 4 years.

May God bless. Thank you for coming. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the Troy Public Square. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell; Mayor Michael L. Beamish of Troy, OH; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government.

Remarks in a Discussion in Lima, Ohio

August 28, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. I've got a lot of work to do today. See, I'm here in Lima asking for the vote. I'm here to tell you I've got a reason to seek the Presidency again. There is a reason to want to serve, and that's to keep the country safer and stronger and better. That's why I want to be your President.

And I believe you've got to get out amongst the people and ask them for the vote. So that's what we're doing here in Ohio on this Saturday. And thanks for coming. Thanks for giving me a chance to—we've got a—I've got a different way of talking about what's on my mind and talking about our agenda. I've actually asked some of your fellow citizens to join me today to talk about what it means to own a business or what it means to own a health savings account, what it means to—what tax relief meant. It's a way of explaining why we have done the things we've done and what we intend to do to make sure this country is a strong country.

I want to talk a little bit about foreign policy. I want to talk about how to spread peace. And then I'm going to answer some of your questions, if you've got some.

Before I do so, I want to tell you that I'm really proud of Laura. She is a wonderful wife. I was a lucky fellow when she said yes. [*Laughter*] She was a public school librarian when I asked her to marry me. She said, "I'll marry you, just so long as I don't have to give any speeches." [*Laughter*] It's the only political promise I've ever broken. [*Laughter*] And thankfully I broke it. What a fabulous, articulate woman she is. She's a great mom, a wonderful wife. There's a lot of reasons why I think you ought to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. She's working on her convention speech. I better get working on mine. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud to be running with Dick Cheney. He is a really solid man. He is a—I like to tease my Vice President by saying, you know, he's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] But I picked him because of his sound judgment, his expertise, and the fact that he can get the job done. That's why I picked Dick Cheney.

I appreciate my friend Mike Oxley. I call him Ox. [*Laughter*] He's the Congressman from this part of the world. He's a really good man. He's a great chairman of an important committee. He's a decent American. I appreciate you coming, Mike. I'd have thought you'd have gotten a better seat, but you know—[*laughter*]. And standing with Mike is United States Senator Mike DeWine. He is doing a fine job for Ohio. He's got another fine Senator serving with him in George Voinovich. Put him back in there for 6 more years; he's a good man to work with.

Governor Taft is traveling today. Thank you for coming, Governor. Kenny Blackwell is with us. I'm honored you both are here. Appreciate you being here.

Karel Oxley—[*applause*]—yes—the superintendent of schools. Thank you for opening up this beautiful school to this dialog we're having. And more importantly, thanks for serving your community. You know I like superintendents of schools so much so that I picked a superintendent of the Harris County School System in Texas to be the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. The reason why is I believe in local control of schools, and I wanted somebody in Washington who understood all wisdom about education is not in the bureaucracies of Washington; it's actually found in the local communities of our States and cities.

I want to thank the Lima High marching band for performing. I'm honored that you're here. I appreciate it.

I also want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. We have a duty in America to vote. One of the amazing facts about what is taking place in the world is the fact that there are over 10 million people who have registered to vote in Afghanistan. Now think

about that for a minute. Ten million citizens have said, "Let me participate in democracy," after having lived under the clutches of a barbaric regime. It speaks to the power of liberty, doesn't it?

Now, we have a duty here to register to vote as well. That's—one of my purposes in taking this bus trip throughout Ohio is to remind citizens from all political parties: Register. And do your duty and vote. Now, I've got an idea who I think you ought to vote for regardless of your political party. [*Laughter*] But you ought to be participating in the system. And there are people here in this hall who are helping to register. And I want to thank you for it. I want to thank you for convincing your fellow citizens to do their duty.

We've got Becky Brown on the bus today. Becky is the one millionth volunteer for the Bush-Cheney campaign. Beck, congratulations for being the one millionth. She is from Miami County, Ohio. Our first stop was in Troy, Ohio. A little over 20,000 people came out to say hello, I want you to know, which is pretty darn heartening. It's a good way to start your morning, if you're looking for votes. [*Laughter*]

But I do want to thank you. You can get on the Internet at georgewbush.com. It's pretty easy to remember—not all that original, I must admit. [*Laughter*] But it's a way where you can figure out how to help. And we need your help, is what I'm telling you. We need your help. We're going to carry Ohio again in 2004. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. Thanks. That's what I'm here to tell you. I'm here to tell you I've got the energy, the desire, the vision to serve this great country for 4 more years. That's what we're here to talk about.

You know it's going to sound probably a little strange for me to tell you this but I wouldn't be asking for the vote if I wasn't comfortable in telling you that this has been a fabulous experience for my family. It probably seems counterintuitive, doesn't it? All the spotlight and the fishbowl and the pressure and the decisionmaking. But it's been great. It really has. And I am grateful and thankful that I've got a wonderful wife and two fabulous daughters who are by my side during these moments in our Nation's history. And it's been really a fascinating experience.

I have a deep desire to continue to rally the armies of compassion. See, the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. We have a strong military. We'll keep it that way. We're the greatest economic engine in the world. And yet the true strength is the fact there are loving citizens in America who are willing to interface with somebody who hurts and says, "I love you, brother or sister. What can I do to help you?"

And this country of ours, it's very important to recognize that Government is limited in its capacity to heal and help. Government can hand out money, but Government cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. And so one of the callings for the next 4 years is to continue to call upon those soldiers in the armies of compassion to help heal those who hurt.

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative which we've started in Washington is a vital part of helping change America one heart and one soul at a time. People often say, "Well, tell me about the Faith-Based Initiative and why you've started it." Well, I'll tell you one reason why. Take, for example, a person who's hooked on drugs. Sometimes that person can get off drugs by a counselor, a kind of a psychological counseling. Sometimes it works. Sometimes, in order to get off drugs, it requires a change of heart. See if you change a heart, you change a person's habits. And so, therefore, if part of my job is to get the job done and solve problems and a problem in our country is the fact that some people are hooked on drugs and alcohol, it seems to make sense to me to call in all aspects of American society to help save lives, including those programs based upon faith which change a person's heart. And so we ought to be welcoming all faiths into the compassionate healing of broken hearts in America, so everybody can realize the great promise of America—everybody in this country. So when I'm talking about a better America, I'm talking about continuing to rally the armies of compassion.

I'm also talking about making sure everybody gets an education. I'm glad we're having this meeting in a schoolhouse. I was just with John Boehner. He's the chairman of the education committee. He's from the district right down south of here. We changed the whole attitude about schools in America. See, when I got into Washington, I was convinced that too many children were just being shuffled through the schools grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So in working with the Mikes who are here and Boehner and others I said, "Look, let's increase funding to the extent we can afford it, but for the first time why don't we ask a simple yet profound question: Can the child read? Why don't we start with that. Why don't we make sure."

I call it challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. You know what that means? It means when you believe certain children can't read and write, guess what's happens? It's exactly what happens. Certain children just get moved through the system. And guess who we're talking about? We're talking about inner-city kids. We're talking about children whose parents may not be able to speak English as a first language. It's so easy to quit on them.

That's not my vision or your vision of the future of this country. Our vison says every child can learn to read and we expect it. Therefore, in return for extra Federal money, you measure. You show us. You tell us whether your curriculum is working. It's your choice to choose the curriculum, but I just want to know. As the man in charge of spending Federal money along with Congress, I want to know whether or not this money we're spending is making sense. And if we're not teaching the kids early enough to read, let's correct it early, before it's too late. That's what we're talking about about a hopeful America. And it's working. This program is working. By measuring, we know. And guess what's happening? By having high standards, local control of schools, extra money to help, the achievement gap in America is closing. Because we measure—that's how we know.

And there's more to do. I want a high school diploma to mean something. I want to make sure we emphasize math and sciences so the rising generation will have the skills necessary to compete in a global economy. We've got a lot to do on education. But a better America is to have the right vision and the right focus on how to improve public education for every single child. And that's exactly what this administration has done, and that's what we'll continue to do over the next 4 years.

A stronger America is an America in which people are able to find work. And listen, I understand Ohio. I've been here a lot, and I will come back a lot. [*Laughter*] This economy of ours has recovered from recession, corporate scandal, and attacks. And yet there are parts of your State that are lagging behind the national economy. I understand that—I understand that. Which means you better have somebody in office who has a plan to continue economic growth, a plan that says here's how we're going to continue the momentum of the economy. And that's what I want to talk to you about. A stronger America is an America in which this economy continues to grow.

The role of Government is not to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish, in which small businesses grow to be big businesses. That's why, when we were in the recession that showed up at our doorstep after the Vice President and I got sworn in, I said to Congress, "Let's cut the taxes on the people. Let's let them have more of their own money to spend, to save, or invest." And it's working—it's working. The economy is strong and getting stronger. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent. That's lower than the average in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The economy is getting stronger.

A couple of things about the tax relief plan—it will fit into some of our discussions with some of the entrepreneurs here. First of all, when it came to providing tax relief, remember how we did it. We said, "If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief." It sounds pretty simple, but that's not always the way Washington does things. So we said, "If you're paying taxes"—so therefore we reduced all rates, which was fair.

We also did some other things inside the code. We increased the child credit. Why? We want it easier for moms and dads to raise

their children. We reduced the marriage penalty. Think about the logic of a Tax Code that penalizes marriage. It's backward. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage, in the Tax Code.

We helped small businesses a lot in the tax relief for two reasons: One, most small businesses in America are what's called an S corp or limited—sole proprietorship. And they pay tax at the individual income tax level. See, here—a small business is called an S corp, but their taxes are paid based upon the individual rates. And by far most businesses in America are either of those two legal forms. And so when you reduce all rates, individual rates, you've got to make the connection. It's important for the American people to understand we're really reducing the rates on small-business owners. And that's important because most jobs—most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. One reason our economy is coming back is because the small-business sector is vibrant and strong.

The other thing we did is we provided incentive for small businesses to invest. And we'll talk to some small-business owners that took advantage of the incentive program that said if you invest, you get a little tax break.

There's more to do to keep the economy going, and let me tell you right quick what I think we ought to be doing. First, one way to say this is that the best way to keep jobs here in America is to make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. I mean, if you want jobs here, it's got to be the kind of environment in which people are willing to risk capital. So what does that mean? It means we've got to have tort reform. There's too many junk lawsuits that are making it hard for businessowners to create jobs. That's one thing it means.

It's tough to get it done in Washington. The plaintiffs bar is one of the special interests that are hard to move, to be frank about it. That's why you need to put me back in there. I'm not afraid of them. I want to continue to push for legal reform that will help our businesses.

I'll tell you another area where we need legal reform, and that is in medicine. Too many junk lawsuits and frivolous lawsuits hurt our docs and hurt our patients. And that's an important issue. By the way, this is a national issue. It's a national issue because junk lawsuits and the defensive practice of medicine as a result of junk lawsuits run up our budgets. They run up our VA budget. They run up our Medicare budget. They run up our Medicaid budgets. It's costly to the taxpayers, but more significantly, it's costly to the communities because docs are being run out of business.

Most people get their insurance through their businesses. Most—and since most new jobs are created by small businesses, it seems like to me that good health policy focuses on the small-business sector. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. It's a problem. It is an issue that we must deal with.

One way to deal with that issue is through medical liability reform. Another way to deal with that issue is to use technologies in medicine to wring out excessive cost and to cut down on medical error. A third way to do so is to allow small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional lines. That means a restaurant in Texas and a restaurant in Ohio can buy policy and—with other restaurants around the country and spread risk across a greater number of employees so as to reduce the cost of health care to—those are called association health plans. That's what that's called. They're being resisted in Washington, DC. But it's a mistake not to allow small businesses to be able to pool risk so they can afford insurance at the same discounts that big businesses are able to afford insurance.

Another way to keep jobs here in America is to make sure we've got an energy policy. You see, if you want workers to be here, we better have a reliable and affordable supply of energy. Two years ago, I submitted a plan to the United States Congress that said, "Let's encourage conservation. Let's encourage research into how to make sure renewable forms of energy are more cost-effective"—that means corn, for example, or soybeans. It means—look, we ought to be exploring the technology and the know-how to expand the use of ethanol.

Can you imagine someday—and I believe it's going happen—someday a President is going to walk in and the ag-type adviser is

going to say, "Hey, Mr. President, the corn crop is up, and now we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy." That's what I'm telling you. We also need to be using Ohio coal. We need to be using Ohio natural gas. If we want to keep jobs here, we've got to be less dependent on energy sources from overseas.

I'm winding down here.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. No, no, I'm just getting started, excuse me—[*laughter*]—getting cranked up. When people start dropping out on the front row, I'll quit. Anyway—[*laughter*].

Let me talk about trade. That's a vital issue, and if we get it wrong, it's going to hurt jobs in America. My position on trade is this: First, we have opened up our markets for goods from overseas for a reason. It's not just me. Other Presidents have done so as well. The way the economy works is that if you have more products to choose from, you're more likely to get a better quality product at a better price. That's the way the economy works. And so therefore, when you open up your markets to foreign goods, it's good for U.S. consumers.

Now, all I'm telling you on trade is that the policy ought to be saying, "We've opened up our markets. You open up yours." See, that's the best trade policy. We treat you one way; you treat us the same way. And that's—and we're making progress there.

Now, I've got tools at my disposal to call to account unfair trading practices, and I'm using them—I'm using them without creating a climate of economic isolationism. See, it's so easy to say, "We'll just isolate ourselves from the world. That's how we'll deal with unfair trade." That's a mistake. That's a big mistake. A lot of capital comes into the State of Ohio from overseas that employs people. But as importantly, a lot of people in Ohio are selling goods overseas.

I'm going to tell you something. The farm economy is good here in this State. You might remember what it was like before I came in. Any farmers here? Yes, okay. You remember, it wasn't so good. Well, one reason the farm economy around this country is strong is because we're selling soybeans to China; we're selling corn around the world. We've opened up markets. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

Let me talk about one other thing—aspect about keeping jobs here in America. It's a very important aspect, and that is I believe we ought to have this concept of a lifetime of learning for all citizens. And let me tell you what that means. It means, first, get it right early. It means make sure the high school diploma means something. We're expanding Pell grants, by the way, to help low-income families afford college. We've added a million—a million students on Pell grants since I've been the President, so we can get people going to college. But what I'm talking about, a lifetime of learning, is to help workers gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I'm a big believer of community colleges, and I'll tell you why. Community colleges are available around the State of Ohio and America; they're accessible. In other words, if you've got a desire to go, you can go. And they're affordable. Plus we're spending your Federal money to help make it even more affordable. I mean, there's a lot of trade adjustment money that helps workers that might have lost a job as a result of trade policy. There is displaced worker money. In other words, we have made money at the Federal level—and I think it's money well spent, by the way—to say to a worker, "If you've lost your job, here is some help to go to a community college to gain new skills."

See, what's happening in a lot of parts of our country is that old jobs are leaving and there's new jobs being created, new higher-paying, better jobs, but there's a skills gap. And we've got to help people fill the skills gap. Let me be specific, what I'm talking about.

The textile industry has lost jobs over the last couple of decades, particularly in the South. And yet, the health care industry is vibrant and strong. And so one of the programs that we put in place is to take—is to help textile workers become nurses or textile workers to become health care technologists.

I remember going to Mesa Community College in Arizona. And a lady stood up, and she said, "I was a graphic design artist for 12 years making X. And I went back to my

Mesa Community College." She got a little help—I think it was a Pell grant—she got a little help from the Government. She went back and got an associate's degree. And she made more money in her new job in her first year than she made in her old job in the 12th year. See, when you go back and gain new skills, it makes you a more productive worker. And when you increase your productivity as a worker, not only does it help you meet the jobs that require new skill sets but you make more money.

And so the challenge in this economy of ours is to grow it, but to make sure the workers have got the necessary skills. We can't make somebody go back to school. We can't say, "We'll pass a law that says you're ambitious." But we darn sure can help with Federal funding, and we will—and we will. To keep jobs in America, we must provide workers with a lifetime of learning opportunity.

We've got Pat O'Connor with us. Ready? Give the man his mike. Pat O'Connor is the president of a small business. Named?

Pat O'Connor. Range Clean Manufacturing. [*Applause*] I've got a couple of associates up there.

The President. Yes, you've got a couple associates up there. Now is your chance to tell him you need a pay raise—[*laughter*]—anyway.

First, let me start by telling you how he's organized. Or you can tell me how you're organized. S corp?

Mr. O'Connor. We're an S Corp. In fact, talk about the tax break, it was actually 2½ years ago I actually bought my father out from the company. He started the company 33 years ago.

The President. I followed my father too—[*laughter*]—just cost me a little time. But other than that—[*laughter*]. Go ahead.

Mr. O'Connor. An S corp, and any of the profits flow directly down to the owner.

The President. See, S corp means that when he has profit, he pays at the individual income tax rate. So when we're cutting tax on individuals, guess what? He got tax relief. I think it's important. You know why? How many people did you hire this year?

Mr. O'Connor. We brought back six jobs from the Orient. We had a couple items that we're selling to Wal-Mart stores, and we worked with our friends down in Bentonville to create a product that had better quality and better pricing and bring those jobs back to the United States. And we brought six jobs back to the United States.

The President. Yes. How many did you hire? I mean, how many people have you hired this year?

Mr. O'Connor. We've hired 30 so far.

The President. Thirty new workers. Look, part of the economic recovery is taking place right here in companies like this. It's—again, 70 percent of new jobs are created because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and people like Pat are hiring 30 here, 10 here, and that's what's happening. The small-business sector of this economy, of this country, is leading the economic recovery.

Outlook? Surely it's not going to be dismal.

Mr. O'Connor. I just sat down—actually, funny you say that—yesterday with our CFO looking at our pro forma for 2005. And we've got an aggressive, double-digit projection for sales increases. So we're looking at reinvesting more money in plant, equipment, people.

The President. Yes, good. Let me ask you a question. Investing—that's a word that you hear a lot of. What are you investing in? What are you buying? When you hear investing, they're investing in, generally, equipment—is that right?

Mr. O'Connor. A great example is we bought a pretty substantial piece of equipment called a pick module.

The President. Pick module, yes. [*Laughter*] It sounds like dental equipment. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. O'Connor made further remarks.*]

The President. And so who—somebody has to make the pick module. So the tax relief says to him, "You invest, you get a little extra kicker on your tax relief." Right?

Mr. O'Connor. You got it.

The President. So, in other words, we're trying to make—we're trying to help influence his decisionmaking through good tax policy. So he says, "Okay, I'm going to buy a pick module." He's got to pick up the phone and order a pick module. Somebody has got to make it. And so when he makes the decision, "I'm going to increase demand

for capital goods because of the Tax Code," it helps somebody else find work. So that's what I want people to understand.

When we say tax relief makes a difference, we're affecting past decisionmaking. The Tax Code says, "Do something wise, because there's incentive to do so. Buy something." And he decided to do a pick module. More importantly, though, it makes his business more productive, I guess.

Mr. O'Connor. You got it. Your tax breaks 2 years ago—our CFO, Dave Link, and I looked at the numbers. Since you and Cheney have taken the administration in office, we've made more money, more sales, paid more in wages, have paid more in taxes, and have pushed more dollars back into the company under this administration versus previous.

The President. I appreciate that.

One other thing that's important to know, and Pat may explain this as well, but if he invests in new equipment, it makes his own workforce more productive. The newer the equipment that he's got in his plant, not only the more efficient his company becomes but the more productive his workforce is. And I just told you that if you're a more productive worker, you make more money. So you read about productivity increases in America, a lot of it has to do with encouraging investment. A lot of it has to do with education, and a lot of it has to do with the modernization of plant floors, like Pat has done.

I appreciate you coming. I love the entrepreneurial spirit of America, don't you? Good job. There's nothing better. There is nothing better, is it, to be in an ownership society. Don't you love the idea of somebody saying, "This is my business." How about the fact that homeownership rates in America are at an alltime high. More people—and it's a fantastic statistic. It is a fantastic statistic of our society. It means more people are opening up that front door, saying, "Welcome to my home. Come into my piece of property."

See, I love an ownership society. It's a hopeful society. It's a society that provides stability in times of change. An ownership society is one where people have a vital stake in the future of this country. And that's important. It's important for people to buy into the future of America. And when you own something, you have a—you have this vital stake on how this country grows and develops.

We've got another owner with us, Rich Rudolph. Welcome. Appreciate you coming, buddy. Thanks for being here. You're not going to believe what this guy makes.

Audience member. Pork rinds.

The President. They know—they know you. [*Laughter*] So does my old man. He knows you. Pork rinds.

Go ahead. Welcome.

Rich Rudolph. Thank you. Welcome here as well.

The President. I'm proud you're here. Tell us about your—everybody knows your business. What a great marketer you are.

Mr. Rudolph. Well, we make the best-tasting pork rinds in the world, my mother's recipe.

The President. Fantastic. Are you listening to your mother?

Mr. Rudolph. Well, most of the time.

The President. Yes, see, you and I do the same way. [*Laughter*] My mother tells me; your mother tells you, and we listen most of the time. [*Laughter*] How's your business?

Mr. Rudolph. We've been booming. The high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are helping. [*Laughter*] Your dad helped a lot in '87, '88.

The President. He's a pork rind man.

Mr. Rudolph. Since your administration, we've added over 50 jobs.

The President. Really? How about this year?

Mr. Rudolph. We're right at above 30 this year.

The President. You added 30 people. You heard one small-business guy add 30. He's added 30. So when you hear these statistics, a lot of times the small-business add-ons aren't showing up. But what you're seeing is the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. That's what people ought to be looking at when it comes to electing the President. How do you make sure the small-business sector is growing? Are you investing at all?

Mr. Rudolph. Absolutely. We invested last year over 3 million; this year, again, over 3 million——

The President. That's great.

Mr. Rudolph. ——and are putting that in to equipment to become more efficient, more competitive, and keep being the largest producer of pork rinds in the world.

The President. Good. Yes, see, what he's telling you is—what did you buy, by the way? Pork scrapers. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Rudolph. We bought cooking equipment, packaging equipment, things that will make us more effective and look down in the future.

The President. See, what he's telling you is, is that he wants to stay in business. If I'm working for that company, I'm saying, "I want the person making decisions for this company to be making decisions necessary so I can keep my job." And so what he just said is, he said he's buying equipment so he can be more competitive. That's the kind of environment we want in America, an America where there's competition that—and a Tax Code that encourages people to make the right decisions like they have in this important company, so that people have job stability.

And one of the reasons I've asked these small-business owners to come is because they are—it's just important to realize there are millions of people making decisions that affect how this economy grows. It's not the Government that makes decisions. It's the individuals in the society making the decisions. And the Government's job is to encourage decisionmaking that leads to job creation, and that's what we're here to talk about.

You know, I'll tell you, looking at these two owners and knowing that they had purchased their businesses from family members reminds me of another part of the Tax Code that we have got to change, in my judgment, to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit. And that is, we've got to get rid of the death tax in America. You for that?

Audience member. All these kids are for that.

The President. The whole family is for it. That's good.

You know, think about this. It's an old tax system. More and more wealth is being spread throughout our society. And now the Government is saying they're going to tax you twice, while you live and pay your taxes, and then they're going to tax you after, when you die. We did pretty good about getting rid of the death tax. We got it on the way to extinction. Unfortunately, it pops back up to life in the year 2011. Another reason to put me in the office is because I'm going to continue trying to get rid of the death tax forever, for the sake of our farmers, ranchers, and small-business owners.

Appreciate you coming. Good job.

One of the interesting opportunities we have is through what I call health savings accounts. And we've actually got a health savings account owner here. One of the things I'll tell the American people is that whatever happens on health care reform, I will make sure that the patient and doctor are central to the decisionmaking process in health care, not bureaucrats in Washington, DC. It's an important philosophical difference in this campaign.

And one way to encourage that is to encourage new products. And we've got an interesting product called a health savings account. These accounts will be very good for individuals and very good for small businesses. Many of the working uninsured work for small businesses. I would strongly suggest small businesses look at this product.

Scott Williams, with us right here today, in Lima, Ohio, is an owner of a health savings account. You want to try to explain how it works?

Scott Williams. It's pretty simple. It's a high-deductible health insurance program that I'm able to put savings away, pretax, to use for that deductible and keeps my premiums extremely low.

The President. Okay, yes, let me see if I can help him here. He buys an insurance policy for catastrophic health care. In other words, the first $2,000, say, he is responsible for. Any health care costs above the deductible, or this, maybe 2,000, whatever your deductible is, the insurance company pays, which means your premiums you pay are really low compared to traditional health care plan.

Tell us what your premiums were before you bought a health savings account.

Mr. Williams. Right before I moved to Ohio, I was out in Kansas City. My wife had been a nurse. We'd just had a daughter. And she decided to go part-time as a nurse, and

so we came off of her health program, and we—right before we came here, we got our statement that said our insurance for the three of us was going to be about $1,100 a month.

The President. Yes, 1,100 a month. Now what do you pay?

Mr. Williams. I pay 270.

The President. So what he's done is—we're not quite sure—we're not quite through filling up his health care plan. We've got—so far, we've got the insurance aspect. The cost per month has gone from 1,100 to 279. But he's obviously got to worry about the zero to 2,000. If the insurance kicks in at 2,000 and above, something has got to happen between zero and 2,000, which means you, essentially, self-insure, or your employer puts money tax-free into what they call a health savings account that you then earn money tax-free inside, and you spend it tax-free. But it's your money, see.

And so—go ahead. Does your employer put the money, or do you put it in?

Mr. Williams. I work for a church, Church of the Nazarene in Defiance. I'm the youth pastor. I've got a couple of my kids here.

The President. Good. Thanks for coming, guys. It's pretty cool.

Mr. Williams. And it's great because——

The President. Right in front of national TV. There he is. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Williams. ——they add an additional $600 a quarter in there for me, which covers everything if I want to get over-the-counter medications, to going to the dentist, to doctors' visits. They will—I just send my receipt—my bills into them, and they write them a check out of that savings account. And it's all pretax dollars.

The President. If he doesn't spend the money in his savings account, it's his. And it rolls over the next year, tax-free. And so what this does is—think about what—think about the different kind of system this is. It's an interesting system, isn't it? It says, first of all, it's up to you to make good choices with your body, because if you do, if you make good choices, if you live a healthy life, you save money. It's your money. You see it grow.

Secondly, as you make decisions, you're making the decisions, not a bureaucrat somewhere else. It's your decision to make. You just heard him. He said, he's going to go and try to buy—he gets the price, all of a sudden. It matters. It starts to matter whether somebody is going to charge him more money. If you've got somebody who's writing the check, like the old insurance system, who cares what the price is, right? Just as long as your premiums seem to seem reasonable, but they keep creeping up year after year.

What I'm telling you is, here's a product that enables the doctor and the patient to be central to the decisionmaking process, a product he calls his own, see. He takes this with him wherever he goes. It's his for life. And it's earning money tax-free, plus it covers major medical expenses for him. Listen, I'm telling you to look into these things. And I want our small-business owners who are out there to take a look, to take a look at this kind of system to help you provide your employees insurance. Plus, guess what happened when we had the tax cut? His family saved $1,100 in tax relief. Isn't that right?

Mr. Williams. Yes. I didn't mention it a second ago, but my premium is that much lower, and I've added a son. And so——

The President. Yes, congratulations.

Mr. Williams. Well, yes. Thank you.

The President. Child credit—raising that child credit helps. [*Laughter*] So look, he's got $1,100. You know what my theory on Government is? We meet priorities and then let the people spend their own money. They can spend it far wiser than the Federal Government can.

What did you do with your tax relief?

Mr. Williams. Because my wife stays home, it allowed us to keep her home more. It just, literally, let her stay home with our kids.

The President. Made you—let's you make more choices. See, part of Government has got to empower people to make more choices, to give people—stand beside, side by side with people, not be so onerous with people that it makes it difficult to realize dreams. The tax relief was a vital part of not only helping this economy recover, but the reason I asked Scott here, it's a part of a philosophy that says, "We trust people with

their own money." We think Scott can spend that money better than the Federal Government can spend his money.

Thanks for coming.

Mr. Williams. Thank you.

The President. Jodie Arnold. Jodie Arnold is a physical therapist. I said, "I kind of feel a little stiff here, you know?" [*Laughter*] After all, I am 58. She works part-time. Her husband, Brian, is the varsity football coach.

Jodie Arnold. Yes, in Bryant, Ohio, and unfortunately, they had a rain-out last night, and he had to play today.

The President. Thanks for coming.

Ms. Arnold. Thank you.

The President. Let's hope he wins.

Ms. Arnold. Yes, me too.

The President. The reason I asked Jodie to come is—in representing Brian, is that, see, it's important to put tax relief in the context of individuals. She and her husband saved $1,700 in tax relief—because of the tax relief, in 2003 and 2004. That's like 1,700 more dollars in their pocket on an annual basis. I know in Washington, that may not sound like a lot. I'm not a lawyer, so you'll probably accuse me of leading the witness, but did it matter to you?

Ms. Arnold. The money made a huge difference. We got that money back right after I had my second child, Addison. I was home a week on maternity leave, and we were able to use that money to put a new roof on our home.

The President. Yes. And I asked her, I said, "Did you hire a roofer?" And she said, "Only after I figured out Brian couldn't get the job done." [*Laughter*] But somebody had to show up to do the work. That's how the economy works. There's an additional amount of demand in our economy in their household because they had a little extra money in their pocket. And so she calls, "Send me a roofer." The roofer is working. The roofer has now got a better future. That's how the economy works.

People have got to understand that. When we're talking—you hear all the rhetoric, you know, in the campaign. "Oh, they're taxing the rich"—I mean, "They're giving breaks to the rich." Here's who is getting the tax breaks, folks—$1,700 is making a big difference in her life.

Now that you've got the floor, you need to say anything? Guess what? She refinanced her home too. That was positive. Things are looking up for the American consumers. And here's the issue—want to say something?

Ms. Arnold. I just want to say that with refinancing our house, we were able to drop our payments $150 a month and also take 10 years off of our loan as well, and that's a big difference.

The President. That's great. Thanks, you did great. Makes it affordable for her home.

And here's the issue, is that if we don't act, taxes are going to go up on the people, because much of the Tax Code we passed—much of the tax relief we passed was done on a temporary basis. The child credit goes down; the marriage penalty goes up; the 10-percent bracket we created goes away. And so the fundamental question is, do we raise taxes on the American people, or do we keep them low? I believe we ought to keep taxes low. Congress needs to hear from you, and the way you keep taxes low is you make all the tax relief we passed permanent. You don't let it go away. You're not raising the money on the people.

See, I'm going to go walking around the country—riding around the country in a bus. I'm going to remember Jodie, and I'm going to remind the people in—I don't need to remind those Members of Congress; there are some others we need to remind, "If we don't act, you're running up her taxes." You heard what she said. She said, "We're able to refinance the home. I'm more comfortable owning my home. I made some home improvements." If her taxes go up, it's less like she's going to make those decisions. If we start running up the taxes on these small-business owners, it's less likely they're going to be making investment decisions. So when you hear me talking about keeping taxes low, I hope you're getting a better feel for why I am. And it's a campaign issue.

We're out there—we've got 2 months to go, and my opponent has already put out about $2 trillion worth of new promises. And we haven't come down to the big promise period in politics yet. That's 2 trillion. So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" And he said, "Well, I'm going to tax the rich." And we've heard that before in politics. The

rich dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you, because we're going to win the election in November of '04.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. Okay, hold on.

I need to talk about peace. I need to talk about how to make this world a peaceful place. I never thought I was going to be a war President, when I campaigned in 2000 in Ohio and around the country. I never—you know, it's just something that I never thought about. And then all of a sudden, I became one because of one day. And I want to share with you some lessons of September the 11th. And they are vital lessons, and they're lessons that I believe this country should never forget, because the most solemn duty of Government is to protect the people.

First, we are in a war. It's a different kind of war. It's a war that—it's a war in which the enemy is an enemy that has a dark ideology that is in opposite of what we believe in America, is the best way to put it. If you don't agree with them, you get whipped in public squares. If you don't agree with them, you'll be killed. They don't believe in human freedoms. They don't believe you can worship freely the way you see fit. They have a single point of view. I believe they've hijacked a great religion. I don't believe they are religious people, because religious people don't kill the innocent. Religious people don't behead people.

The nature of this enemy—it's important to understand the nature of the enemy—they are coldblooded. You cannot negotiate with these kind of people. It doesn't do any good to try to hope for the best with them. They are patient. They are determined, and they must be defeated by being resolute and strong and never wavering. Our strategy is clear. We will stay on the offense. We will defeat them elsewhere so we do not have to face them here at home.

Secondly, we will work to spread liberty around the world. And I'll talk to you about that in a minute. So the first lesson is, know your enemy. And once you fully understand the enemy, it drives policy. And these are people that will behead somebody and get on TV and brag about it, hoping to shake our will, because we're decent people. We're loving people. We've got a conscience. They don't, and therefore, there must be a steadfast resolve.

Secondly, any time America says something, we better mean it, for the sake of peace. And when we speak—when this country speaks, we better mean what we say, in order to make sure that there is a firm resolve.

By the way, I forgot to mention one other aspect. Once you figure out the nature of the enemy and know that they hide in caves and dark resorts of the city, it requires a universal effort to find them. And we put together a universal effort. I mean, we've got intelligence sharing which is strong and good. We've got people trying to cut off their money. We've got law enforcement looking for them, and we're using our military to find them too. We're going to use all assets to run these people down. There's no need to hold back. We will chase them down.

The second aspect of the war on terror is, because they can lurk and hide, it's important to say to those who might provide them safe harbor, if you harbor them, if you provide them safe haven, you're just as guilty as they are. That was—I said that, and I meant that. I first said that when I was talking about Afghanistan. You might remember that Afghanistan was the safe haven for these people. They went in there, and the Taliban was running the country. This is a group of people that didn't even let young girls go to school. They'd take their mothers out in the public square and whip them if they thought they were kind of out of line. They were barbarians, as far as I was concerned. And Al Qaida came in there and became a parasite. They kind of got inside their country, and they trained thousands of people.

And right after we got attacked, I said, "Listen, you're harboring them. Give them up, or face serious consequences." I meant every word I said. And they didn't, and we have removed the Taliban from power.

America and the world are safer because Afghanistan is a rising democracy. I told you there's 10 million people have registered to vote. That's amazing. Do you remember 4

months ago—I'm telling you about the power of liberty—4 months ago, they pulled those poor ladies off the bus, the voter registrars, the Taliban did, and killed them because they were working on the vote. A lot of people said, "Gosh, this is going to be a dim day for democracy. It's going to intimidate people." The power of liberty cannot be stopped. It is a powerful, powerful part of the soul of every citizen. Ten million people have registered to vote for their Presidential elections coming this October. Think about the change.

I was in Cleveland at the Children's International Games. I'm giving a speech to welcome them there, the children from around the world, and there's the Afghan girls soccer team. Man, I nearly broke down in tears, taking a look at those young girls there.

Liberty is important. It's important to be proud of the fact that we have freed them, but in so doing, we've made ourself more secure. That's what the American citizens must understand. By securing ourself, we're helping others realize the great freedoms of the world, and freedom is peace. Free societies aren't going to harbor Al Qaida. Free societies aren't going to breed resentment. Free societies are peaceful societies.

The third lesson of September the 11th is we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. When we see a threat overseas—you know, prior to September the 11th an American President wouldn't say that, necessarily, because we thought oceans protected us. We were—we've lived for a long time before there was an attack on America the likes of which we saw. Pearl Harbor, I guess, was the last significant attack like that. And we felt, gosh, we're pretty well immune from threats. And sure enough, we aren't. And it's a vital lesson. It's a tough lesson for a country that felt protected for a long period of time, but it's a lesson we cannot forget. So when we see a threat, we must deal with it.

The last option for the President must always be the military option. The last option before a President makes the difficult decision to put somebody in harm's way is the military. And so, therefore, I tried diplomacy. I wanted to solve this threat diplomatically. I felt like we could, maybe, pull the world together and convince Saddam Hussein to disarm.

I saw a threat—let me tell you why I saw the threat. Let me just review the history right quick. This guy had actually used weapons of mass destruction before. Secondly, he was a sworn enemy of America. You might remember, during that period of time, he was shooting at American airplanes that were enforcing sanctions. Thirdly, he harbored terrorists. Zarqawi was in and out of his country. Remember Abu Nidal? He's the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer because he was Jewish? He found safe haven in Iraq. In other words, terrorist groups were in this guy's country. He paid the families—he subsidized the families of suiciders who may go blow somebody up, generally, an American or a Jewish person, Israeli. He'd pay them. That's terror. He killed thousands of his own citizens. I mean, this guy was a threat.

And so I went to the United Nations, and I remember standing up there in New York City, and I said, "This guy's a threat. And you've passed a lot of resolutions before. Why don't we pass one that means something to make the world a safer place and to protect us. In the post-9/11 environment, we have to take the man seriously."

And so we went to the U.N. and I—we also went to the Congress, by the way. Members from both political parties looked at the same intelligence I was looking at. They had the same memory I had of Saddam Hussein. They voted overwhelmingly to say that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force—including the man I'm running against for President. He voted "aye" when it came to say, "I see a threat. You can use force." He looked at that same intelligence, and so did the U.N., and they voted 15 to nothing in the U.N. Security Council. And here's what they said. They said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the—basically the resolution said. The United States of America, under my instruction, voted "aye." We said, "You bet. Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences."

He refused to disclose. He basically ignored the demands of the free world. He had done this, by the way, for over a decade. We had tried diplomacy long before I arrived. And he said, "I'm not interested." He

was hoping the world would turn a blind eye. He was hoping we would look the other direction.

And then when we sent inspectors in—I agreed; I thought the inspectors made sense to go in there. I want to try to solve things peacefully before we ever commit troops. He systematically deceived the inspectors. And that was clear, and that's been documented. In other words, all we're saying is, "Show us what you've got." And he said, "No way."

So I had a choice to make, a choice that only comes to the Oval Office. The choice was whether to trust a madman who hated America and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action necessary to do my duty and defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

A couple other points. We did not find stockpiles of weapons we all thought we would. Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. He could have passed that capability on to an enemy. It is a risk that we could not afforded to have taken after 9/11. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. The world is a safer place. The world is a safer place with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

And now we're doing the hard work of helping Iraq and Afghanistan become democracies. And that's one of the interesting parts of this debate, is can they become democracies. I believe they can. I believe that liberty and the desire for liberty has the power of transforming societies.

Tell you one reason I believe that. I've—I was sitting down with my friend Prime Minister Koizumi. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. You know, it wasn't all that long ago in the big scheme of things, in the long lineage of—in the long timeframe of history, that my dad and your dads were fighting the Japanese as a mortal enemy. It wasn't all that long ago. And here I am having dinner with this fellow, and we're talking peace. We're talking about how to work together to make the world a more peaceful place.

See, what happened after World War II is my predecessor and others said that liberty can transform an enemy into a friend, that freedom has got the capacity to take a group of people with whom we have fought, viciously fought, and transform an attitude into one that was hostile to peaceful. It's a part of history we must never forget in this country. And so here I am, sitting with Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to deal with Kim Chong-il, the North Korean tyrant, how best to surround him with nations saying the same message, to get rid of his nuclear weapons programs.

Now, I'm telling you something. I believe that liberty can transform lives, and I believe people want to be free. And I believe, if given a chance, people long for freedom. That's what I believe. It's a core of my belief system. I'll tell you why I believe it. I believe that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman on this Earth.

So our policy in Afghanistan and Iraq is to provide enough security so the political process can get going, so they can have the 10 million people vote in Afghanistan. It's been 3 years since they were run by the barbaric people called the Taliban. Iraq is going to have elections next January. Imagine the transformation of a society.

I'll tell you another story real quick, now that I've got you here. [*Laughter*] I may just say this next week. It's a powerful story. So I'm in the Oval Office. The Oval Office is the kind of place where people stand outside the door saying, "I can't wait to get in and tell him what for." And they walk in, open up, and they go, "Man, you're looking pretty, Mr. President." [*Laughter*] It's a powerful place. The only person not affected that way has been my mother. [*Laughter*]

The door opens up and in walks seven Iraqi men, all of whom had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein and an X carved into their foreheads because the dinar, the Saddam dinar, had devalued and he was looking for scapegoats. I asked the one guy, "Why you?" He said, "I was a small-business guy, small-business man." He wasn't making pork rinds. He was making jewelry. He needed to sell dinars in order to buy another currency to be able to buy the gold to make his jewelry. And he did so, unfortunately, when the dinar started to devalue, and this thug was looking for a scapegoat. And they

pulled these seven guys out—in order to justify his currency devaluation, I guess, in his own mind—they chopped these guys' hands off.

And so they walk into the Oval Office. The good news was, is that Marvin Zindler, a Houston newsman, and others provided money for them to get new hands. And they're coming to see me. And it was unbelievable, incredibly emotional moment, because the contrast between a society in which somebody can summarily cut off a hand and a society in which people are willing to restore hands was vivid and real. These guys understand the stakes about what it means to live in a free society. They told me, they said, "We long for freedom." And if given a chance, they will—our strategy is to help Iraq move toward a free society. Our strategy is to train Iraqis so that they can stand up and defend themselves against the few, the tyrants, the terrorists, those with dark vision, so that they can stand up against them and defend themselves, and that's what you're seeing.

What you're seeing is a strategy that's working, a strategy that recognizes the power of liberty to transform societies, a strategy that says people do want to be free, and a strategy that says people are willing to stand up and defend their freedom.

Prime Minister Alawi, who is now running Iraq, is a tough, strong guy who believes in the aspirations of the Iraqi people. He's a guy who one night woke up in London and saw a—people with an ax try to ax him to death, and Saddam had sent them. And the ax hit his wife, and it really severely affected her. But he's a guy who saw firsthand what it means. And now he's in the midst of that country saying, "Follow me. We're headed to democracy."

A free and peaceful Iraq is going to be the kind of place where a tyrant can't summarily cut somebody's hand off. And some day an American President is going to sit down and talk to a duly elected official from Iraq, talking about how to keep the peace in a volatile part of the world. And he or she as President is going to say, "Thank God my predecessor and the American people had great belief in liberty to transform the world."

I want to make two other points, and then I'll answer questions. Then I've got to get on the bus.

Audience member. God bless you, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you. He has.

Two other points. I want to emphasize again, free societies are peaceful societies and freedom in the heart of the Middle East is going to serve a powerful example for Palestinians who are wondering whether or not there's a—a free state can emerge. And that's important. That's important, especially for our ally and friend Israel, that there be a peaceful state grow up. A peaceful Iraq and Afghanistan serve as powerful examples. There's a lot of people in that part of the world who are watching us like hawks. They want to know whether or not we're willing to live out our beliefs. There are reformers—there are women in the Middle East who want to hear their—have their voices heard and to realize their potential. No, it's important for America to lead and to lead with our values.

The second thing I want to tell you is I want to thank the military people who are here. I want to thank the military families, and I want to thank our veterans who have served as such a great example. Thank you all. The loved ones need to hear from the Commander in Chief. We will continue to work to make sure your loved one has all the resources necessary to do his or her job.

That's an issue in this campaign. It's an issue in this campaign. By the way, I have fulfilled my pledge. We have the largest defense increase since Ronald Reagan was the President. Military pay has gone up 21 percent over the last 3 years. Military housing is improving. When we had our troops in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, I went to the Congress and said, "Look, we need 87 billion additional dollars to support them in their mission." This is important money. It was body armor and spare parts and fuel and ammunition, that which you expect to maintain a military operation. It was necessary, and we got great bipartisan support. I was very impressed by both Republicans and Democrats who strongly supported it. As a matter of fact, the bipartisan support was so strong that only 12 Members of the Senate

voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate. It's a difference in the campaign.

When you're out there rounding up the vote, I think it's important to remind people of the facts. So they pressed him. They said, "Why did you do it?" He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] That's not the way they talk here in this part of Ohio, I don't think.

I'll support our troops. I met with a lot of moms and dads and wives and husbands of people who have lost their life in Iraq. And I told them this, I said, "I want you to know that history will look back upon the actions that your loved one has taken in a way that will be powerful for your family members because we're changing the world. The sacrifices that they made not only helped make America more secure, but it helped spread the peace." And the best way to honor the memory of those loved ones is to complete the mission, is to not grow weary; it's to not tire; it's to be resolute and strong in our belief that we will succeed.

I'm here to tell you, I want to be your President. I know where I want to lead the country. I have the energy to lead the country. And I want to thank you for your help in helping me win 4 more years. God bless.

Let me answer some questions. All right, we've got a little more work to do. Then I'm going to get on the bus. I'll be glad to answer some questions. We've got 5 or 6 more minutes.

Yes, sir. Yell her out.

National Guard/Leadership/Gun Ownership

Q. I would very much like to thank you on behalf of all of the people from the Right to Life.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. I also want—that people would like to know I'm a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association. And Mr. Kerry and Edwards have got F minuses, and they said, "You're the only man."

The President. Well, thank you.

Q. And also, too, that I'm really sorry, on your behalf, of the fact that they're trying to bring this issue up about the National Guard. I have many, many good friends that served in the Guard during the highlight of the Vietnam war. And they—there is eight of them that are changing parties because they've had it with the Democrats, and they said that they owe us an apology. And Mr. President, what military branch did Mr. Clinton serve in? [*Laughter*] Exactly.

The President. Okay, never mind. Okay. Look, thank you. I appreciate your strong defense. I'm proud of my service. The question is who best to be the Commander in Chief to lead us to peace. That's the question. The question in this campaign is who understands what it takes to defend America during these troubling times. That's the real issue. I've just explained to you my position. I hope everybody is listening out there. They'll be able to make up their mind about who best.

Let me talk about guns right quick. I believe law-abiding citizens should be allowed to own weapons. And I believe the best way to protect society is to find people who commit crimes with guns and bring them to justice, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Got a question? Sure. Thank you, sir.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, I'm here representing 44,000 brethren who are praying for you——

The President. Thank you.

Q. ——urgently. And we appreciate very much the stand that you've taken on many, many moral issues. We appreciate it very much. And we just would love to ask you if you're prepared to take on health care the same way you've taken on Iraq? We really appreciate the stand you've taken. You've done marvelously in Iraq, and we feel that there's an urgent need in relation to health care.

The President. Okay, good. Good question.

First, thank you for your prayers. It's an amazing country that prays for the President, and I am grateful. And I thank you for that.

You bet I'm going to take on health care and have, starting with taking care of people who can't help themselves. We've expanded community health centers all across America, and we will continue to do so over the next 4 years. These are places where low-income citizens can get primary care. And that's important. You know why? It takes the pressure

off your emergency rooms. We want people who cannot afford to get help to be able to find a place to do so, and the Federal Government has stepped up and done that. And we'll expand—we'll expand them.

Secondly, Medicare—it's a huge part of the Federal budget. And campaign after campaign after campaign, people around the country say, "Oh, we're going to fix Medicare," and never did anything get done. It used to be called "Mediscare." You know, you'd talk about it, and they would bash you over the head with the issue.

I went to Washington for a reason, and that was to strengthen systems that needed to be helped, was to transform parts of the Government to recognize the realities of the modern era. And one of the key issues I focused on in my first term was Medicare. And we brought Democrats and Republicans together, and we got the job done in Medicare. We're strengthening Medicare. Let me tell you how. First, seniors get drug discount cards for the year 2004, which will provide savings. Secondly, there's going to be preventative care in Medicare for the first time. Seniors will now get preventative screenings. It's basic logic, isn't it? Let's screen for disease before it's too late. Let's solve seniors' problems in Medicare now.

Thirdly, for the first time Medicare will provide prescription drugs in the year 2006. And that's important. It's really important. I'll tell you why. The old system would pay for our heart operation, but it wouldn't pay for the drugs that would prevent the heart operation from needing to be in the first place. Now, what kind of system is that? It's a system that would pay the 100,000 for the operation but not the $2,000 to prevent the $100,000 operation from having to occur. And so we said, "Why don't we strengthen the system and give seniors in Medicare prescription drug coverage." So that starts in '06.

Fourthly, if you have a plan you like, nothing changes. This doesn't force anybody, anywhere. As a matter of fact, it provides additional choices. I happen to believe the more choices people have, the more likely it is the system will be responsive to the people. If you can make choice in the marketplace, the marketplace will respond. So this new Medicare, strengthening of Medicare, has got an additional feature in that it helps seniors select a plan that fits their needs as opposed to kind of a one-size-fits-all plan out of Washington, DC.

Thirdly, I told you about HSAs—I didn't tell you about it; one of our guests told you about HSAs. I told you about AHPs. Those are ways to make sure that a system is more affordable and more available but keeping the patient/doctor relationship central to the decisionmaking process.

That, by the way, is a key component of this debate. You listen to my opponent talk about it, and you can put it all together—basically what he's advocating is a federalization of the health care system, which I think is wrong for the country, and I think it's bad for the country. And I don't think it's responsive to consumers and to patients if the Federal Government is making drug pricing decisions, if the Federal Government is making all these different decisions on behalf of the consumers.

Thirdly—fourthly, I talked about medical liability reform. It is a necessary part of making sure health care is affordable. One of the reasons why there's working uninsured is because of the cost of health care. And if we can deal with the root causes of the cost of increasing health care, more people will get insurance.

I think there needs to be tax credits for working uninsured. I think we need to help small businesses with HSAs. I'll talk about that a little later on here during the course of the campaign.

I talked to you about—you got me going here. [*Laughter*] I talked to you about technology. This is—health care is an industry where somebody takes a file and puts it under his or her arm—I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I'm pretty accurate—and goes from one office to the next. And the files are handwritten, and doctors don't write very well. [*Laughter*] What I'm telling you is, is that unlike a lot of other industry, the technology hasn't changed how health care is delivered and how the administrative costs of health care are—they haven't helped reduce the costs of health care like it has in a lot of other industry.

And so this administration started a plan to encourage the development of an electronic medical record for every citizen in the country, with privacy rights. That will help streamline and reduce costs in medicine. They estimate 30 percent cost reduction in medicine when we get technology introduced into the health care industry.

And you say, "Why can't you do that tomorrow?" Well, there's got to be common language. I mean, there's a lot of issues that have to be dealt with, and the Federal Government can help.

Finally, let me talk about drug costs right quick. I think the best way to deal with drug costs is to ensure—is to encourage generic drugs getting to the market faster. One of the things it seems like makes sense to me is to make sure that we continue to have incentives for research and development in the pharmaceutical industry to keep looking at new horizons of how to save lives and how to improve people's lives with new medicines. But this business about stalling the advent of generic drugs, which are much cheaper than brand-name drugs, has been stopped by administration—this administration, which will encourage a much cheaper drug to be available for consumers on the market but yet able to do the same thing the brand drugs do.

That's a long answer. As you can tell, we're on it. [*Laughter*] But what I won't allow happen so long as I'm the President is for the Federal Government to run your health care system. I think that would be a mistake.

Okay, last question. There he is right there. Yes, sir, soon-to-be-voter.

President's Reading Habits

Q. Thanks for coming. I was just wondering what your favorite book is, because I'd like to read it.

The President. Book—that's a great question. Well, I—the Bible. [*Applause*] Hold on. Hold on. I read the Bible. I like history. I read a lot of history. I'm not so sure this one will be appropriate for you, but I just read the—a very thick biography on Alexander Hamilton.

But I would suggest reading history, because history is a—I think it's important to understand the past so you can better see the future. Like I just told you something about the past that gives me confidence about the future, and that was when Japan and the United States were at war, and then we worked to encourage Japan to be a self-governing, free nation based upon democratic institutions. And out of that came a country that is now a friend and an ally as opposed to an enemy.

See, enemies—liberty can turn enemies into friends because we have shared values. When we—when we're free nations, we share values. Human rights is a shared value of a free nation. Human dignity is a shared value of a free nation—the right to worship the way you see fit.

Let me say one thing about religion real quick. It is very important that this Nation always hold—always maintain this vital tradition: You can worship any way you see fit. If you choose not to worship, and worship, you're equally American. It's important for people to understand that. We must never lose that vital aspect of the freedom to worship the way you choose. Now, if you choose to worship an Almighty God, you're equally American if you're Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu. It's the great tradition of America, and it's a tradition that must be maintained.

It's a part of, when I say "shared values," that's a shared value of a truly free society, isn't it—the freedom for—in somebody, that personal freedom to choose or not to choose to worship an Almighty is a vital aspect of the integrity and vibrancy of this great society of ours. And it's important—that's an important lesson, little guy, for you to remember when you get to be the President. [*Laughter*]

At any rate, I want to—I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. I'm excited about this election. There's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will be back in the White House for 4 more years.

God bless, and God bless our great country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:36 p.m. at Lima Senior High School. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell; Karel Oxley, superintendent, Lima City Schools; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro

Koizumi of Japan; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; and Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government.

Remarks in Perrysburg, Ohio

August 28, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for inviting me here to Perrysburg. It is an honor to be here. I appreciate you taking time out of your Saturday afternoon to come and say hello. I'm sorry we were running a little late; there was a slight weather condition. I'm here to ask for your vote. I'm traveling your State asking for the vote and asking for your help. I'll tell you what I think. From the crowds we've seen, there's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we'll carry Ohio and win a great victory in November.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. She's a fabulous mom, a great wife. She's a terrific First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate. I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney. I picked him because he's got sound judgment, he's got great experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I've been traveling all across your important State today with a really fine United States Senator in Mike DeWine. I'm proud to be calling Mike friend. And I hope you put old George Voinovich back in office. He's a great United States Senator. He's doing a fine job. I appreciate Congressman Mike Oxley joining us today. Larry Kaczala is running for the United States Congress next to this district. He's a fine guy.

I want to thank the members of the statehouse who are here, Ken Blackwell and Betty Montgomery and Randy Gardner and Bob Latta. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank my friend Lee Ann Womack. I hope she did a good job for you. I can't tell you how much I appreciate her coming.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I appreciate you. I appreciate your hard work. See, I believe we have a duty in this country to vote. And therefore, I'm asking you to help register people to vote. See your friends and neighbors and say, "In a democracy, we've got to participate." And ask them to register, and reach out. And when you get them headed toward the polls come November, tell them if they want a safer country, a stronger country, a better country, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

In the past few years, Americans have been through a lot together—been through a lot. We have accomplished a lot. But there's only one reason to look back at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to tell you, there is more to do to make this country a safer place. There is more to do to make this country a hopeful place. I'm here to tell you, I've got the energy, the vision, and the willingness to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

We have more to do to make sure our schools are the centers of excellence we know they can be. You might remember, when we first got up there to Washington, the school system was shuffling too many children through our schools, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations. We raised the standards because we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract. We increased Federal help for States and local districts. But we started to ask a simple question: Are you achieving results? Can our children read and write? And, if so, we'll praise the teachers. But if not, we have the courage and willingness to challenge the status quo. No child should be left behind in America.

There's more work to be done. We've got to insist upon science and math programs in our high schools to prepare our kids for the jobs of the 21st century. We've got to make sure the Internet is available in classrooms. We want a high school diploma to mean something. After 4 more years, a rising generation will have the skills and confidence necessary to compete in our global world.

I'm running because I understand we've got to work to make health care more affordable and more available. You might remember the old debates on Medicare. They used

to call it "Mediscare." People were afraid to touch the issue, but the system needed to be strengthened for our seniors. I went to Washington for a reason. I wanted to fix problems. We had a problem in Medicare. But working with Republicans and Democrats, we got the job done. Now our Medicare system will provide preventative care for our seniors and provide prescription drugs for our seniors.

There is more work to be done when it comes to health care. We want to make sure that we continue to expand community health centers for our low-income citizens. We want to keep people out of the emergency rooms when it comes to primary care. We want to make sure we continue to work with our small businesses. Most people get their insurance small—through their employer, and most new jobs are created by small businesses. Yet, small businesses are having trouble with health care. We must allow small businesses to pool risk so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses do.

In order to make sure your health care system is viable and in order to make sure there's docs available, we've got to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of your medicine. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs, and I'm standing with the hospitals, and more importantly, I'm standing with the patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to improve health care in America, we'll make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, DC, bureaucrats.

We've got to do more to keep this economy growing. Listen, we have been through a lot. We've been through a recession. We've been through a stock market decline. We've been through corporate scandals, and of course, we've been through a horrible attack on our country, all of which affected ability for people to find work.

But we've overcome those obstacles. We've overcome them because the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong. We've overcome it because the small-business sector is alive and well. We've overcome it because we've got great farmers and ranchers. We've overcome it because we've got the best workers in the world. And I think we've overcome those obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

You might remember the tax relief plan. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." We did it the fair way. We also raised the child credit to help families. We reduced the marriage penalty. Our Tax Code has got it backwards. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage in the Tax Code.

We're helping our small businesses, and it's paying off. Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.5 million new jobs over the past 12 months. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent. That's well below the national average in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Our economy is strong and is getting stronger. I fully understand there are places here in Ohio where people are still looking for work. And so long as anybody is looking for work, this administration will create the conditions for job growth.

We have more to do to make sure this economy remains strong. Congress needs to pass my energy plan. In order to keep jobs here in America, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep jobs in America, we need tort reform, tort reform so our small-business owners are not threatened by these junk lawsuits. In order to keep jobs in America, I will insist that countries treat us the way we treat them when it comes to trade. You see, our markets are open. They ought to open their markets. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

In order to make sure we keep jobs here in America, we need to make sure there's a lifetime of learning available for our workers. It's a changing economy. There are new jobs available. But a lot of times, our workers don't have the skills necessary to meet those jobs. And that's why I'm such a strong backer in the community college system. We've got Federal monies available to help people get the skills necessary to realize their dreams. We will continue to work to make sure the

American worker has the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

In order to keep jobs here in America, in order to make sure this economy grows, in order to make sure people are able to realize their dreams, we need to be wise about how we spend your money, and we need to keep your taxes low.

This is an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has promised over $2 trillion in new programs.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We've still got 60 days to go. [*Laughter*] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, I'll just tax the rich." Now, you've heard that before, haven't you? "All we're going to do is tax the rich." Well, the rich dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. But guess what? We're not going to let him get there. We're going to win in November.

We've got more to do to wage and win this war on terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers around the world and in the United States. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, over 10 million citizens in Afghanistan have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, we now have an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. You might remember, he was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. And I saw a threat. I looked at his history, and I saw a threat. I looked at intelligence and saw a threat. I also remembered one of the most important lessons of September the 11th. It's a lesson this country must never forget. We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize, before they come to hurt us.

So I went to the United States Congress and said, "I see a threat. What about you?" Members of both political parties looked at the intelligence, remembered his history, and voted overwhelmingly for the use of force if need be, including my opponent.

Because military action is the last option of the Commander in Chief, because the very last option ought to be the commitment of our youngsters into harm's way, I went to the United Nations and tried the diplomatic route. I said, "We see a threat. How about you?" They looked at the intelligence, and they voted overwhelmingly in the United Nations Security Council to say—to pass this resolution, "Disarm—disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the free world said.

As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. They sent inspectors in there. He systematically deceived the inspectors. I had a choice to make, a choice that only comes to the Oval Office, whether I ignore the lessons of September the 11th and trust the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you very much. Even though we did not find the stockpiles we thought we would find, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons and could have passed that capability on to our enemies. After September the 11th, that was a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the

same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go in Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we haven't found the stockpiles we thought we would find, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I appreciate him for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] However, I want to warn you, there's still a little over 60 days for him to change his mind.

I'm asking for your vote because I know there is more to do, more to do to continue to work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. In this post-9/11 world, you cannot hope for the best with these killers. We must aggressively pursue them elsewhere so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat these terrorists, nearly 40 countries in Afghanistan, some 30 in Iraq, about 60 countries involved in the Proliferation Security Initiative. That's an initiative that we put together to hunt down people who might be transporting weapons of mass destruction materials and technology. No, the world is working together, and I'll continue to build our alliances. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We'll keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We'll keep our commitments to help them become peaceful and democratic societies. It's in our interests that they become peaceful societies. It's in our short-term interests and it's in our long-term interests that peace and freedom prevail in those countries. We've given our word, and when America gives its word, America must keep its word.

There are strong leaders now in those countries, strong leaders who believe in freedom and believe in the aspirations of their people. Our troops are there to help the political process move forward. And we're there to help train the Afghans and the Iraqis so they can defend their own freedom, so they can do the hard work that's needed for democracy. Our troops will complete this mission as quickly as possible so they do not have to stay a day longer than necessary.

We have got a fantastic United States military. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a good example for those who wear the uniform. I have made a commitment to our troops and the commitment to the loved ones of our troops that they will have the resources they need to fight and win the war against the terrorists. It's a solemn commitment by our Government. We are meeting that commitment.

We've had the largest defense increases since Ronald Reagan was the President. We've increased military pay by 21 percent since I've been the President. We got better housing, since I've been the President, for our troops. And last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This legislation provided money for body armor, vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was necessary legislation. And the Congress responded in a very strong bipartisan fashion. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the funding for our troops, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him. They said, "How can you not support our troops in combat?" He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." I don't think many people talk that way here in Ohio. [*Laughter*] And so they pressed him. And he said, well, he was proud of the vote. And then they pressed him even further, and

he said, "Well, the whole thing is just a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. See, a free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a neighborhood which is desperate for freedom. Free societies do not export terror. Free societies listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. By serving the cause of liberty, we are bringing hope to others, and that makes America more secure. By serving the cause of liberty, we're bringing peace to the world. By serving the cause of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American soul and the American spirit. See, we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I'm running because I want to help spread the peace. I'm running so these youngsters can grow up in a more secure America, in a more hopeful and peaceful world. I strongly believe in the power of liberty to transform lives.

You know, I was recently meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. We were having a discussion about the peace. It's an amazing conversation, when you think about it. You know, it wasn't all that long ago in the course of history that my dad and your dads were fighting an enemy called the Japanese in a tough and brutal war. Yet because we believed in liberty, because we believed in the transforming power of liberty to change an enemy into an ally, because we didn't waver in our belief in liberty, after World War II, we helped our enemy become a self-governing, democratic nation. And here I was talking to the leader of a former enemy about peace in the Korean Peninsula. Some day, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader from Iraq talking about keeping the peace.

We have more to do to protect our country. There are enemies out there that hate us. You know, we have a difference of opinion on this subject. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I think the logic is upside down. I think it shows the misunderstanding of the nature of these people. During the 1990s, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before we went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. See, you don't create terrorists by fighting back. You defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

We've got work to do to continue to defend our homeland. I've been working hard to make sure our intelligence services gather the best intelligence so those of us in Government can make the best decisions to defend you. There's good cooperation between the Federal, State, and local levels now, good conversation going on. We've created the Department of Homeland Security, and it was tough reforms in Washington to get it done. We need to renew the PATRIOT Act so our law enforcement officials have the tools necessary to disrupt terror cells. We're working hard to better protect our borders and our ports. You just got to know there's a lot of really decent people working long hours on your behalf to do everything we can to protect our country.

I'll continue to push for reform in Washington, but it's hard. There's a lot of entrenched interests in Washington, DC. There's a lot of special interests in Washington, DC. There's a lot of people willing to defend the status quo in Washington, DC. See, it's not enough to advocate reform; you have to show the people you can get it done.

So when you're out there lining up the vote, remind them that when it comes to reforming our schools and raising the standards and expecting the best, we're getting the job done. Tell them, when it comes to improving this farm economy, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving the overall economy and creating jobs, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms for our seniors and our families, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing the homeland and fighting the terrorists and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. And remind them, when it comes to choosing the President, put somebody in there who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. You know, we live in interesting times here in America. These are times of change. And change can be unsettling; I understand that. See, I think the role of Government is to help people during times of change, to provide people with the tools necessary to adapt to times of change. That's why I'm a strong supporter of flextime and comp-time. I know a lot of moms are now working, and I think we need to have work rules that enable people to be flexible with their schedule so that they can spend time with their families. I know people are changing jobs and, therefore, that's why I support health savings accounts, so people can take their insurance with them from job to job and know they've got coverage for their families.

I see a lot of younger workers here today. Baby boomers like me are in good shape when it comes to Social Security. But you better be asking which candidate understands the fiscal dangers for young workers in Social Security. In order to make sure Social Security exists for future generations, I believe younger workers ought to have the option of taking some of their own money out of Social Security and setting up personal savings accounts. Those accounts will be yours that you can pass on from one generation to the next.

See, what I'm telling you is, in a changing world, it's important to promote ownership in America. Ownership will help. Ownership means Government is standing side by side with people, not dictating to people. That's why I want to create the conditions so more people can own their own small business. And that's why one of the greatest statistics, I think, in the American scene today is that the homeownership rate is at an alltime high.

We'll continue to press for homeownership in America. I think the idea of somebody opening up that door, saying, "Welcome to my home," is an important part of the American experience and the American future. This administration understands if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

In this changing times, there are some things that won't change: the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; our beliefs in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. In changing times, we will honor our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. You know, the culture is shifting from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in this wonderful community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

I'm running for 4 more years to continue to rally the armies of compassion, those loving souls who have heard a call to help somebody who hurts. See, I know Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart, a sense of purpose in a person's life. We need to rally the strength of the country, which is the hearts and souls of our citizens. We can change America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time, by encouraging loving souls to love their neighbor.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, an unshakable belief in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that era—that week when one era ended and another

began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats shouting at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember working the line and a fellow looked at me with his bloodshot eyes, and he grabbed me by the arm and he said, "You don't let me down."

He took that day personally. Everybody there took it personally. You took it personally, and so do I. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every morning trying to figure out how best to defend America. I will never relent in defending this great country, whatever it takes.

We've come through much together. We've come through much together, and we've done a lot of hard work. We're moving forward by extending freedom around the world and expanding opportunity in this country. And there's more to do. During the next 4 years, we will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner. We will pass the enduring values of our country to another generation. We will continue to lead the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

Four years ago, I traveled your great State. When I was asking for the vote, I said if you gave me the high honor of being your President, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of that office. With your help, with your support, I will do so for the next 4 years.

May God bless you. Thank you for coming. Thank you all for coming. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:17 p.m. at Fort Meigs State Memorial Park. In his remarks, he referred to country music entertainer Lee Ann Womack; Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell; Ohio Auditor of State Betty Montgomery; Ohio State Senator Randy Gardner; Ohio State Representative Bob Latta; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Wheeling, West Virginia

August 29, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. And thanks for having me. I am thrilled to be back here in the Mountain State. You may have noticed I'm spending some quality time here. You know why? Because we're going to carry West Virginia again.

I'm here to thank you for your help. I'm here to ask for your vote. I'm here to encourage you to go the extra mile to get people to show up at the polls. Most of all, I want to thank you for coming out on a Sunday afternoon. I appreciate you all coming out and taking time away—or bringing your families here. It means a lot to me. I really appreciate it.

You know, I was in your neighborhood a while ago. I was at the new Cabela's. The place has hired over a couple thousand jobs, creating a couple thousand jobs there. I'm there because I'm a hunter and I like to fish. I understand a lot of people in these parts like to fish. A couple of you like to hunt. I just don't get to do enough of it. I'm hunting for votes.

There's a lot of differences in this campaign. You know, one of the most notable differences came up the other day when my opponent said, "Well, you can find the heart and soul of America in Hollywood."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. I think you find the heart and soul of America right here in Wheeling, West Virginia.

I gave Laura a kiss goodbye today and said, "I'm heading to Wheeling." She said, "Well, I'm working on my speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Well, make it a good one, will you?" [*Laughter*] I didn't need to say that. Of course it's going to be a good one. Laura is a great First Lady, a wonderful mom, and a great wife. I'm really proud of her—I'm really proud of her. Today I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back into office. Perhaps the most important one of all is for Laura to be the First Lady for 4 more years.

Rick mentioned my runningmate. I'm real proud of Dick Cheney. He's a great, solid man. I admit he's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his judgment, his experience, and his ability to get the job done.

I thank Rick, Rick Casini, for being here. I'm proud of his leadership. As he told you, he's a union shop steward, he's a leader of men and women. He's—he represents the

hard-working people of the steel industry here in this part of the country. It means a lot to me that he stands up and endorses my candidacy. See, I believe our message is good for Republicans. I believe our message is good for Democrats, and I believe our message is good for independents.

I appreciate the steelworkers who are standing behind me, standing with me. When I make up my mind on issues, I don't say, "Well, you know, oh, so-and-so might benefit, but they didn't vote for me." That's not how I do things. I make up my mind based upon what I think is right.

And I appreciate—I want to thank my friend Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito for joining us today, a fine Member of the United States Congress. I want to thank the Wheeling Park High School Marching Band for being here today. I'll try to keep my speech short, so you can get back home and do your homework for tomorrow. [*Laughter*] No? Okay.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Kathy Fortunato is with us today. And I want to thank all of—here's what a grassroots activist does: You put up signs; you make the phone calls; you register people to vote. See, we have a duty in our country to register people to vote and to vote. And therefore, I'm asking you, as a supporter, to go out amongst your friends and neighbors and remind your friends and neighbors to register. Tell them that in America our system functions because people participate. You might remind them of this amazing statistic, that in Afghanistan, after 3 short years of their liberation, over 10 million people have registered to vote. They're getting a whiff of liberty in Afghanistan, that sweet smell of freedom. And here in America, we must remind people to participate. See, that liberty functions because people show up. And when you get them registered, don't ignore Democrats. You heard Rick—[*laughter*]—don't worry about—don't overlook discerning independents. And then, when you get them registered and you get them headed to the poll, remind them, if they want a safer country, a stronger country, a better country, put us back into office.

We have been through a lot together in the last few years, and we have accomplished a lot. We have done a lot. But there's only one reason to look back at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm traveling your important State to let you know that even though we have done a lot, there's more work to do, that I've got more to accomplish with your help, that I want to make sure our schools realize their full potential so every child—every child—has a chance to realize the great promise of America.

We're working with our local folks to make sure that excellence is in every classroom. See, I believe in local control of schools. We're spending more money at the Federal level to help you out here. But we're changing things, because now we're beginning to ask the question, can a child read and write and add and subtract, see. That's what we're beginning to ask, because we believe every child can learn to read, and we expect every child to read. And when we find the schools that are teaching, we'll praise their teachers. But this administration will challenge the status quo. We will make sure that schools that do not teach and will not change get the message that every child should learn to read in America.

There's more work to be done. I believe in intervention programs to make sure children have the skills necessary to learn. I know we've got to raise the standards in our high schools by working on math and science curricula. We want more Internet in our classrooms. We want a high school diploma to mean something. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will have the skills and confidence necessary to realize the American Dream.

We've got more work to do on health care. We're making good progress on health care. We've created community health centers all around the country, so low-income people can get primary care. It seems like a legitimate function of your Government is to help people with their health care needs, if they can't afford it. You might remember the old Medicare debate. That's a program, of course, that our seniors count on. Many seniors will tell you the program needed to be modernized and strengthened. See, you couldn't get prescription drugs through

Medicare, not until old George W. came along.

We worked with Republicans and Democrats to say, "Let's keep our commitment to our seniors." Beginning in the year 2006, seniors are going to have choices in Medicare. Seniors will be able to design a program that meets their needs. Plus, Medicare will include prescription drugs.

We created health savings accounts for American families, so you can save tax-free for your own health care needs. I fully recognize most people get their health care through their businesses. Most small—most new jobs are created by small businesses. A lot of small businesses are having trouble affording health care these days. One way to address that problem is to allow small employers to join together to pool risk, so they can buy insurance at the same discount big businesses get to do.

We will continue to spend dollars on research, so we can help find cures for terrible diseases. We'll work to modernize the health care industry. But I'll tell you one thing we need to do to make sure you've got health care that's available and affordable: We need to stop these junk lawsuits that are threatening our docs. This is an issue in this campaign. You see, I don't think you can be pro-plaintiff-attorney and pro-doctor and patient at the same time. See, I don't think you can be pro-small-business and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

In all we do to improve health care, we will make sure the health care decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'm running again because I want to continue the economic growth we're seeing now. We've been through a lot in this economy. We've been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals, and we've been through those—a terror attack. And yet we've overcome these obstacles. We've overcome them because we've got great workers in America. We've overcome them because we've got great farmers in America. We've overcome them because the small-business sector is alive and well in America. We've overcome these obstacles because of two well-timed tax cuts.

We didn't try to pick winners or losers when it came to tax relief. We did it the fair way. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." We increased the child credit. We reduced the effects of the marriage penalty. I believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We helped our small businesses, and the plan is working. Our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Over the last 12 months, we've added about 1.5 million new jobs. The unemployment rate, the national unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent, which is well below the national average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in West Virginia is 5.2 percent.

The economic plan we put in place to overcome the obstacles this country faced is working, and there's more to do. That's why I've come here to Wheeling, West Virginia, to let you know there is more work to be done to make sure this economy continues to grow, to make sure anybody who's looking for work is able to find a job. To keep jobs here in America, we must have reasonable and fair regulations. You see, you ask your small-business owner here what it's like to fill out paperwork, and a lot of them will tell you it's too much. My problem is I can't guarantee you whether anybody in Washington has ever read the paperwork you fill out. We need tort reform in America to keep jobs here in America.

Listen, to keep these folks working, to keep people working around the country, we need a sound energy policy in America. I submitted a plan to the Congress, and a vital part of that plan is a strategy based upon clean coal technology. As a matter of fact, my budgets for clean technology have increased 160 percent since I came to office. The budget next year for clean coal technology is $447 million. The reason why I'm telling you this is, an integral part of making sure we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy is coal.

And I remember campaigning in this State in 2000 and telling you that was my position then. And I'm running against a fellow who

is kind of shifting. [*Laughter*] A while ago, he said coal is a dirty source of energy. Then he decided he wanted to come to your State and knock on your door. And then he said, "Now, well, I am for legislation that is supporting clean coal technology." In other words, he shifted. He's out there mining for votes. [*Laughter*] All I'm asking you to do is tell your friends and neighbors, be careful of somebody whose position shifts in the wind.

Trade policy is important to make sure that jobs stay here. See, our markets are open for other folks. It's good for you that they're open. When you have more choices, you're liable to get a better product at a better price. That's how the economy works. So what I'm telling other countries is, "We're treating you this way. You treat us the same way."

And we'll enforce law in this administration. We think an industry is being treated unfairly, we'll enforce the law, and that's exactly what I did when it came to the U.S. steel industry. See, I thought there was a—I thought I needed to stand up for steel, and I did stand up for steel. I put in place safeguards to restore fairness to the market to help our steel folks adjust, and it worked. The plan worked. These folks back here are working in good jobs, good, high-paying jobs. See, if the rules are fair, if the playing field is level, our workers, our small-business owners, our farmers, can compete with anybody, anyplace, anytime, anywhere.

We need to provide our workers with a lifetime of learning to keep jobs here in America. The economy is changing. New high-paying jobs are being created. But sometimes, there's a skills gap. Sometimes somebody needs a little help going back to the community college to be able to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. I'm committed to making sure our workers have got an opportunity to go back to get an associate degree, so they have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

And finally, in order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low. It's an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has already put out there about $2 trillion worth of new spending promises. That's $2 trillion. That's a lot—with a T. [*Laughter*] And we've got 60 days left. No telling what's going to happen coming down the stretch. [*Laughter*] So they said, "Well, how are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Well," he said, "we're just going to tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Yes. Oh, you're just going to tax the rich. You know how it works: The rich dodge, and you pay. But we're not going to let him. We're going to beat him in November of 2004.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I am running again because I know we have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, today, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. They're going to have Presidential elections in October of this year. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. You might remember, he was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had

used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He and his henchmen murdered tens of thousands of his own people. He was a great source of instability in the world's most volatile region. He was a threat.

After September the 11th, this country must remember the new lessons. And a new lesson is, is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. That is the new reality of the world in which we live. And it's really important we never forget that reality. So I saw a threat, and I went to the United States Congress. They looked at the intelligence I looked at. They remembered the history of Saddam Hussein, and they said he was a threat and authorized the use of force—they being Republicans; they being Democrats; they being my opponent and his runningmate.

Because the use of force should be the last option of the Commander in Chief, the very last option, I went to the United Nations in the hopes that diplomacy would solve the threat. You might remember, the debate went on, and after consideration, the U.N. Security Council voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." So the world spoke.

As he had for over a decade, he defied the demands of the free world. This wasn't the only U.N. resolution he ignored. We then sent inspectors in—or the world sent inspectors in, and he systematically deceived the inspectors. And so I had a choice to make: Whether or not to trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend our country.

You know, we did not find the stockpiles that we thought would be there. I want to remind you that Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to others. And after September the 11th, that is not a risk this country could afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, he now agrees with me that even though we haven't found the weapons we thought would be there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I appreciate him for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] However, there's still a little over 60 days for him to change his mind again. [*Laughter*]

I'm running for 4 more years because I know we have more to do. We will continue to work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. In the post-9/11 era we live in, you just simply cannot hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

We will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition. We're working with some great allies. There's over 40 nations involved in—nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan and some 30 in Iraq. Over the next 4 years, I will continue to work with friends to help secure our country, their country, and spread the peace. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We're going to keep our commitments to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. It's in our interest we keep our commitment. It's in our interest they become peaceful and democratic societies. The two nations are now governed by strong leaders who believe in the hopes and aspirations of their people. These nations are now headed for elections. Our strategy is clear, and our goal is clear. The goal is to have peaceful, democratic countries in the heart of the Middle East who are allies in the war on terror. That's our goal. It's in our interest we achieve that goal.

We are meeting that goal by providing security so that the political process develops. We will meet that goal by training Afghan

and Iraqi forces so they can defend their country against these terrorists, so they get to take—do the necessary hard work for democracy to survive. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible, so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

In these crucial times, the men and women of our military keep our commitments. We've got a great military. The people who wear our uniform—I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. The cause of freedom is in really good hands. And I want to thank the veterans who are here today for setting such a great example to the modern military.

I made a commitment to our troops, and I made a commitment to their families as well that this Government will support them in their missions. That's why, last September, I went to the Congress and said, "We need supplemental funding—support the people over there in Afghanistan and Iraq." This funding was for body armor, vital equipment, fuel, ammunition, spare parts, hazard pay, health benefits. This is important legislation. And I was really pleased that we got great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my runningmate and his—my opponent and his runningmate. See, they voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him, they said, "Why did you vote against the funding?" He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." That was his explanation. I don't think a lot of people in Wheeling talk like that. [*Laughter*] So they pressed him even further. He said, well, he was proud of his vote. And then they said, "Well, you know, what else?" And he finally said, "Well, it's just a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] His words. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not going to be guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. Free societies do not export terror. Free societies do not stifle the dreams of their citizens.

We've done this kind of work before. One of my closest collaborators in peace is the Prime Minister of Japan. It wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that my dad and your dads were fighting the Japanese. And yet here we are, because we insisted upon the transforming qualities of liberty, we insisted that Japan be given a chance to self-govern and be a democratic nation. We believe that even an enemy could accept liberty as a way of life. Fortunately, my predecessor, Harry Truman, stuck with that point of view. Fortunately, America stuck with that point of view, and now Japan is an ally and a friend.

We believe in liberty in America. We believe that liberty can transform nations from tyranny to hope. We have seen it in our past. We not only believe that liberty will bring peace; we know that liberty answers to the deepest needs of the American soul. See, freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We have more to do to protect this country. I'm running because I understand that we've got to work hard to protect America. See, there's an enemy out there that still hates us. It's the reality of the world in which we live, and we'll deal with that. It's very important that we view these people as who they are. There's a difference of opinion in this race. I want to address a subject that I'm sure you're going to be asked about. See, my opponent said that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I think the logic is upside-down. You see, during the nineties—remind somebody who asks you that, that during the nineties the terrorists were recruiting and training and plotting for war with us, long before we went to war with them. I think it's wrong to provide excuses for their hatred. You don't create terrorists by fighting back. You defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

A lot of good folks working hard to protect the homeland, good folks at the Federal level, State level, and right here in Wheeling, West Virginia. You've got a great—a lot of really great first-responders who are responding. There's more to do. We've got a

lot to do. We're beginning to implement some of the intelligence reforms that are necessary to make sure we've got the best intelligence. I've got to have the best intelligence to make decisions; our planners and everybody involved with the Government needs to have the best intelligence. That's why we're implementing a lot of the 9/11 Commission reforms. We want to make sure there's still good, close cooperation between the different agencies in Washington. We're working on doing that. We need to renew the PATRIOT Act, so our law enforcement have the tools necessary to protect you against terrorist attack. We'll continue to work to make sure the Homeland Security Department does its job.

I'll push for reforms. I've got to warn you, it's hard to get reform in Washington. See, there's a lot of entrenched interest there, a lot of people willing to defend the status quo. When you're out there campaigning, remind them it's not enough to advocate reform. You need somebody in Washington who can get the job done.

When it comes to reforming our schools, to raise standards, and close the achievement gap, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving health care for our seniors and giving Americans more opportunities and more choices in health care, we're getting the job done. When it comes to a strong and vibrant steel industry, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving our overall economy, we're getting the job done. When it comes to finding the terrorists, securing the homeland, and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. When it comes—and tell your friends and neighbors, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

We live in a time of change, and change can be very unsettling. It's really a different time, when you think about it. Not all that long ago, moms stayed at home. Now, moms are working. Not all that long ago, a person would work for one company and retire with that company, and that company provided the health care and retirement. That's changing. These are changing times, and I fully understand that. And they can be unsettling times. And therefore, Government has a role not to dictate to people but to help people, to stand side by side with people.

And one way to do that is to promote an ownership society in America. One way to help people through times of change is to encourage ownership. That's why I support health care policies that people can call their own, manage their own, so they can take them from job to job. That's why I believe it's very important in the Social Security system to say to boomers like me, nothing's going to change. We're in good shape. But if you're a younger worker, you better listen very carefully to the Presidential debates on Social Security. The fiscal solvency of Social Security is in doubt for the young workers coming up. Therefore, I think young workers ought to be able to own a personal retirement account, a personal savings account, in order for Social Security to work.

In times of change, it's really helpful for people to own their own home. There's nothing better than people opening that door up and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." Today, the homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. We want more people owning their own home. We want more people owning their own business. If you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

Changing times—there are some things that won't change: the values we try to live by, courage, compassion, reverence, and integrity; our beliefs in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. During changing times, we will support the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations.

We believe—and we stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. See, the culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us

understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're a mother or a father, if you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. That's your responsibility. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

Today when I landed, I met Nancy Weeks. Nancy works with the 4–H National Youth Development Program. She takes time out of her life to teach values to kids. I'm sure there's Scout leaders here, Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders here. I know there's Little League scouts here—I mean, Little League coaches here. I know there's people working with kids. I know there's people here feeding the hungry, providing shelter for the homeless, loving those whose souls need love. See, the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American citizens. That's our strength. I'm running again to rally the armies of compassion, which are changing this country one heart and one soul at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and an unshakeable belief in the values that makes us a great nation.

You know—and you'll never forget, either, the week when one era ended and another began. I stood in the ruins of those Twin Towers on September the 14, 2001. It's a day that I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I was coming down through there and shaking hands, a fellow looked me right in the eye, and he said, "You don't let me down." See, he took the day personally. Everybody there—you took it personally. I took it personally. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every day trying to figure out how best to defend this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through a lot together. We've done a lot of hard work. But there's more work to be done. That's why I've come to Wheeling, West Virginia. During the next 4 years, we'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. During the next 4 years, we will pass the enduring values of this Nation on to another generation. During the next 4 years, we'll continue to spread freedom and peace, and we will prevail. You know, with your support and your prayers, I will be a leader that America can count on during a time of change.

Four years ago, I came to your State a lot. I'll do so again now. I said if you gave me a chance, if you voted for me and if I was fortunate enough to hold this office, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help and your hard work, I will do so for the next 4 years.

God bless. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. at the WesBanco Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Casini, steelworker, ISG Weirton Inc.; Katherine Fortunato, West Virginia State chair, W Stands for Women Steering Committee; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. He also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Remarks in a Discussion in Nashua, New Hampshire

August 30, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Go ahead and take a seat. I've got some work to do. So I see your senior Senator—that would be Judd Gregg. He says, "When you get up to New Hampshire, come up there and tell them what's on your mind and answer some of their questions." So I'm here to tell you what's on my mind, and I'm here to answer some of your questions. I'll tell you what's on my mind, first and foremost. With your help, we will carry New Hampshire again and we're going to win a great victory in November. [*Applause*] Thank you.

So I'm here asking for the vote, see. That's what you've got to do. I think you've got to get out amongst the people and say, "I want your vote. And I'm going to talk about how to make this a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm asking for your vote because there's more work to be done to make America a safer place and America a more hopeful country for every citizen who lives here. I'm also here to ask for your help. See, I don't think you can win elections alone. I think it requires citizens who are willing to register people to vote, to put up the signs, to turn out the vote. And that's what I'm here to ask you to do. I'd like your help as we're coming down the stretch. There's no doubt in my mind that with your help, we're going to win.

I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in. Perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. [*Applause*] All right. I love her dearly. She is a great mom. She is a really good First Lady. She's been a calm in the midst of storm. She has got a clear vision about a better America. I'll never forget the day she took on the Presidential radio address—for that morning, it became the First Lady's radio address—and she spoke to the women of Afghanistan. And because of her gentle and her strong words of support, she lifted the spirits of thousands of women in a country that had been brutalized by tyranny. And Laura has got that ability to do so, and I—thanks for coming—she is a—I can't wait for the country to hear her speech. She's giving a speech tomorrow night.

Tonight, by the way, at our convention, we've got America's mayor, Rudy Giuliani, speaking. And a true American hero, John McCain, is speaking tonight too. They're kicking off the convention with positive speeches. This is going to be a positive experience for the people of this country to see what we believe.

I talked to the Vice President this morning. He's getting ready to crank it up. I admit it, he's not the prettiest face on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, and because he can get the job done.

I want to thank your Governor. I appreciate your Governor, Craig Benson. See, he's like the Governor of Massachusetts. These are people that did not have to run. They're not full-time politicians. They were successful entrepreneurs. Craig decided to leave a comfortable life and serve. I think it's a great and noble example. I hope you put him back into office as the Governor. And like me, he married well. The first lady, Denise, is doing a great job in this State as well. Thank you, Denise.

I appreciate old Governor Romney sliding across the border. I'm proud of his leadership. Here is an example of strong, steady leadership. He stands for what he believes. And I want to thank his sweet wife, Ann, for joining us. Ann, thank you for being here. The mom of four—the mom of five—now, that's one first family, isn't it?

I've already mentioned old Judd. He's a great United States Senator, I'm telling you. He is steady. He's strong. He's making a big, big difference in the Senate. He's fun to work with—most of the time. [*Laughter*] He's plenty capable, and he knows what he's doing, and he married well. We love Kathy a lot.

It turns out when the President comes, a lot of people show up that you have to recognize. I'm working my way through. I can't wait to tell you why I'm running again. [*Laughter*] Before I do, I've got to talk about two Members of the United States Congress, as a matter of fact, the only Members of the United States Congress from New Hampshire but really fine people. First, Charlie Bass is with us today. Where are you, Bass? There he is, yes. I don't know what you did, but you deserve a better seat than that. [*Laughter*] Yes, okay, well—and Jeb Bradley. Thanks for coming, Congressman. I appreciate it.

We've got the mayor, my friend Bernie Streeter, who is here. I appreciate you coming, Bernie. You know, people don't like advice from one politician to another, but here's my advice: Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] You don't have to take it if you don't want to.

Where's Cheryl? Cheryl McGuinness, sweet Cheryl McGuinness, the widow of American Airline Flight 11 pilot Tom McGuinness, one of the strongest characters

of our country. I'm proud of you. Thanks for coming. God bless you. Thank you. You're a sweet girl. Thank you all for coming—a woman of enormous strength.

You know, I talk about a more hopeful America. Part of a more hopeful America is a better America. That's why we've got to make sure our education system is right. We worked hard in Washington, DC, to change an attitude of the Federal Government, an attitude that used to be, "Here, we'll just give you some money and hope everything turns out right." And it hasn't worked. So when I went to Washington, I said, "Why don't we challenge what I've called the soft bigotry of low expectations, raise the bar, expect results."

We've increased Federal funding, but in return for increase of Federal funding, we're finally asking the question, "Can a child read?" See, that's what we're asking. And we want to know. We want to know whether or not we're accomplishing the mission. And if a child can't read early, there's money in the budget to correct the problem before it is too late. We're challenging this notion that simply said, "There's some kids you just can't educate, so move them through." That's not good enough for a better America. That's not good enough for a hopeful America.

And it's working. The system is working. There's an achievement gap in America, and it's beginning to close. You know how we know? Because we measure. It's working because school districts have found that certain curriculum can't work, and they're changing. You see, accountability is necessary to diagnose and solve a problem. You'll hear the critics say, "Oh, measurement, all that does is punish." No, measurement saves lives. How can you correct a problem unless you measure?

And there's more work to be done. We got to make sure there's math and science in our high school classrooms so our kids have the skills necessary to compete in this global economy. We need serious intervention programs for eighth and ninth graders who have been shuffled through the system so they've got at least the foundation necessary to learn and think. We need to make sure a high school diploma means something. There's more work to be done to make sure this education system raises expectations and meets expectations across the country. I believe strongly in local control of schools. I believe strongly in empowering parents. I believe strongly in challenging the status quo when schools will not teach.

A better tomorrow is one where Government recognizes its limitations. See, I don't think Government can love. I think Government should dispense justice, but Government is not a loving organization. The strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. And a President and a Governors ought to rally that great compassion found in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's why the Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiative is so vital for an optimistic future.

I'll give you example of what I'm talking about. Sometimes a Government program can help heal an addict, and we ought to herald those programs. But sometimes an addict needs a change of heart before he or she changes behavior. And therefore, we ought to welcome those programs which have the capacity to change a person's heart into the social fabric of the American system. Government ought not to fear programs based on faith. We ought not to discriminate against faith—programs based on faith. We ought to welcome faith-based programs to help heal broken hearts in society.

Today—where's Alison? Okay, hold on. We got too much work to do. We got too much work to do—too many interruptions here. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Well, I appreciate that. I love New Hampshire.

Okay, one of the interesting ways that I try to make points is to have others make them for me. And Alison Brackett is with us today. She runs a program called Bridges of Learning. And where are you based?

Alison Brackett. Out of Greenland, New Hampshire.

The President. Well, she's clearly from New Hampshire. [*Laughter*] So you probably never heard of Bridges of Learning nor Alison. She's here because she is a social entrepreneur. Tell us what you did.

Ms. Brackett. We are a organization that collects and then distributes school materials, supplies, and needs throughout the world.

The President. Right, okay. Isn't that amazing? Think about this. And so when did you start? Who told you to start this?

Ms. Brackett. My children. [*Laughter*]

The President. You've got some good kids. So it wasn't a Government program. The President didn't say, "Start this." The Governor didn't say, "We're going to pass a resolution in the New Hampshire House for you to do it." She heard a call.

And so what do you do? I know you distribute school supplies. Give us a little—some details.

Ms. Brackett. Well, my children and an army of volunteers go around to various schools and supply houses and families and churches and organizations, like the Seacoast Republican Women, and they collect the supplies we need. We box them up, and we ship them around the world. And currently, we ship them to our Army that is stationed in Afghanistan.

The President. Yes, okay, wait a minute—yes. I think you're beginning to get the picture of what I'm talking about when I say, "We're going to call upon the army of compassion in America to respond." See, this isn't a Government program. This is a program based upon the hearts of a family who said, "What can we do to make a contribution in our society? How can we make America and the world a better place?"

So think about this. They've collected school supplies. They're shipping them to Afghanistan. Some soldier is going to hand a school supply to a young girl who, by the way, now goes to school for the first time thanks to the United States of America.

One other question. It says here that you ship 45 boxes every 2 weeks.

Ms. Brackett. Yes. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes, fantastic. Listen, thanks for coming.

Ms. Brackett. Thank you.

The President. Here's why I've asked her to come. I know many of you here and people around New Hampshire also hear a call to help. But see, societies can change because the Alisons of the world take it upon themselves to change society. And the role of a President is to call upon and herald and thank the soldiers in the armies of compassion that will change this country one heart at a time.

Thanks for coming.

Ms. Brackett. Thank you.

The President. A more hopeful America is one in which people can work. It's hard to be a hopeful society if you're not working and you want to work. So one of the most important parts of my job during the next 4 years will be to continue to create an environment that is conducive to job growth. See, I don't think the role of Government is to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, in which small businesses can thrive and flourish.

And as Mitt mentioned, our economy has been through a lot. When you're out there garnering the vote, remind your friends and neighbors what we have been through. We've been through a recession. That means we're going backwards. It's hard to be a small business in a recession, by the way. We've been through corporate scandals. That's when certain citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible American and did not tell the truth. By the way, we've changed that attitude in America too. It's clear now we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. And we've been through a terror attack, all of which affected our economy.

But the economy is growing, and it's getting better, and it's strengthening. Why? Because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, because we've got the greatest workers in the world, because our farmers and ranchers are the best in the world. I happen to think as well it's because of two well-timed tax cuts.

Benson tells me the unemployment rate here is 3.9 percent—3.8 percent. It's dropping every second. [*Laughter*] The tax relief plan, the economic stimulus plan we passed is working here in the Granite State—3.8 percent. That's what we want in America, isn't it? We want people working.

And so the question is how do we keep jobs here and how do we keep the economy growing. Well, I believe the most important thing is to make sure this is the best country

in the world to do business. If you want businesses to expand, America has got to be the best place in the world to do business, which means—let me tell you what that means. It means we've got to have an energy policy. We've got to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy in order to make this a good place.

We've got to have trade policy. We've opened up a good trade policy. We have trade policy. And here's what good trade policy means. We've opened up our markets. See, it's good for you that our markets are open, because the more products you have to choose from, the more likely it is you're going to get better quality at a better price. That's how the market works. So good trade policy says, "We'll open up our markets. You open up yours. You treat us the way we treat you." And that's the policy of this administration. We're knocking down trade barriers. We're opening up doors. I believe the American worker and the American farmer can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere so long as the rules are fair. So when you see us talking about unfair trade practices from China, that's what we're doing. We're making sure the rules are fair. That's all we want to be, is treated fairly.

In order to make sure that this economy continues to grow, we've got to do something about the cost of health care. Most people get their health care through their jobs. Most new jobs are created by small businesses, and many small businesses are having trouble with the cost of health care. It's an issue. The way to deal with it is to put a strategy out that makes sure that patients and doctors are the decisionmakers for health care, not Government bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

So we've done that. We have done that, and there's more work to be done. We have put in place community health centers for low-income Americans to get premium care—primary care, and that's important. We want to help. I think it's a legitimate use of taxpayers' money to help those who can't afford health care to have a place where they can go get primary care.

Secondly, we will use the new technologies available for other industries. We'll promote them into health care industries so that we can wring out the inefficiencies in the health care system to reduce the costs. People say, "What does that mean?" Well, I'll you what it means. I heard the story of a guy who had to carry a file full of paperwork from one specialist to the next, see. That's not the way most—most industries are able to use the Internet in order to wring out those kind of inefficiencies, to reduce cost. He not only has to carry the file from one specialist to the next; he could barely read the writing in the files. Why? Because doctors wrote them. They can't write very well. And it leads to medical error. My point to you is, is that by the proper use of technology, we will reduce the cost of medicine all across this land.

Thirdly, small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can get the same discounts on health insurance that big businesses are able to get.

Fourthly, people ought to look into health savings accounts. They are a way to reduce the costs of health care and at the same time make sure that the patient is in charge of the decisionmaking process. I was talking to a guy in Ohio the other day. He said, "I have a health savings account," which basically says that he buys a high-deductible insurance policy for catastrophic care and contributes tax-free for the balance. So it's an incentive for him to make good choices. It's incentive for him to say, "I'm going"—and if he does go into the marketplace, to shop wisely. His premium was $1,100 a month. His premium now with the health savings account is $259 a month, and the company contributes tax-free into a savings account that is his own. Listen, this is an important opportunity for individuals and small businesses.

Finally—I may go on for a long time on health care. What I'm telling you is we're not going to nationalize health care under George W. And my opponent is, see. That's the difference. My opponent will. We won't.

Finally, I'll tell you one way to hold down costs—this is a—I'm telling you, I'm about to explain to you a national problem. You know how I know? I hear it everywhere I go—everywhere I go. I hear it from ob-gyns. I hear it from specialists. These frivolous lawsuits that are being filed against docs

are running up your health care costs and are running good docs out of business.

This is a national problem that requires a national solution. I do not think you can be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-hospital, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose—I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

Let me make three other quick points; then I want to talk about how to make this country more secure. And then, if I don't filibuster, I'll answer some questions. [*Laughter*] I can see Laura beginning to grimace a little bit. She says, "He's getting awfully windy"—[*laughter*]—Texas term. Anyway—[*laughter*]—look, in order to keep jobs here, we've got to use our community college systems wisely. We have a changing economy, and in a changing economy, there are new jobs available, higher paying jobs than the old jobs—jobs of the past. But people need skills in order to fill those jobs. So I support what I call a lifetime of learning, to help these workers go back to our community colleges so they can gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I'll tell you a classic example of what I'm talking about. We were at Mesa Community College in Arizona, and a lady stood up and she said, "I'm a graphic design artist for 12 years, and then I heard of a program"—to help somebody in her status go back to the community college, Federal program. That where we provide money to help people go back to school if they want to go back to school. She went back to school, received an associate degree, I think it was after 18 months, and after 18 months of a community college experience, she made more money in her first year of working for her new company than she did in the 12th year of her previous job. You know why? Education enhances the productivity of the workforce. It makes people more likely to fill the jobs of the 21st century, and a more productive worker is a worker who will make more money.

Finally, we got a plan to continue to grow this economy. I'm running because I understand how to put the conditions in place to encourage economic growth and vitality. And there's two other things we need to do. One is we got to be wise about how we spend your money. Be real careful about people who are running for office and say, "Well, here's what we're going to do with Government money." See, if you have that mentality that we're spending the Government's money, they don't understand what they're talking about, because it's not the Government's money we're talking about. It's your money. It's the people's money.

And secondly, in order to make sure this economy grows, we've got to keep your taxes low. And there are some folks in Washington who do not want to keep your taxes low. Here's what I believe. I believe we can set priorities, meet those priorities, and then you can spend your money far better than the Federal Government can.

And it's an issue in this campaign. We got ample money to meet our priorities, unless of course, you believe that the Federal Government ought to be the—ought to be giving the orders. [*Laughter*] And I'm running against a fellow who has already promised over $2 trillion of spending—new spending. And we're just—we haven't even gotten to the stretch run yet. [*Laughter*] Awfully tempting to get out there and tell people what they want to hear. And so they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, I'm just going to tax the rich." We've heard that kind of talk before, "tax the rich." The rich dodge; you pay. But the good news is we're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November. [*Applause*] Okay, hold on.

September the 11th changed America. I'm running for 4 more years because I want to make this country a safer place, change your sweet life. That day taught us that oceans no longer protect us from harm's way, that suddenly and unexpectedly, an enemy can strike us, and therefore, we've got to do a lot to protect the homeland, and we are. We've created the Department of Homeland Security to better coordinate between the Federal, State, and local jurisdictions how to respond to threats and how to deal with emergency.

We're going to talk here in a minute to the district chief of the Manchester Fire Department, Nick Campasano. Right—yes, there he is. Let me just say a couple of things. You can stay standing. I'll give you a chance to warm up. [*Laughter*] Got to loosen up.

A couple of things I want to say about protecting the homeland. We've got to make sure we've got the best intelligence-sharing possible. We are working hard to make sure the intelligence agencies are well coordinated and information makes it to my desk and to the other planners' desks. There's strategists' desks in Washington, DC. I've got great confidence in the Central Intelligence Agency. I just know we can make sure that we've got to do a better job of collecting information and analyzing information so that we can better protect you.

It's very important that we enable the FBI and the CIA to share information. You're not going to believe this, but prior to September the 11th, the operators in the FBI could not share information with the intelligence gatherers of the FBI. That's just the way it was. So you might have an entity find out that something that looked like a terrorist activity was going on, but they couldn't tell the people who were responsible for busting the cell. That's why we passed the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act is a vital tool for our first-responders. They know it. And I want to assure you that anytime that we use the tools of the PATRIOT Act, we get court order. In other words, we go to a judge.

What I'm telling you is, is that we've given law enforcement the same tools with the same constitutional guarantees for our citizens that we've given them to track down drug dealers and white-collar criminals. The terrorist act is important. You need me in there for 4 more years to make sure it's renewed so the people on the frontlines of busting these cells are able to do so.

And so we're going to have a little talk with Nick here. One of the budgetary increases that we worked with Judd and the Congressmen on was to increase money for first-responders. Just—let me take a step back. Outside of funding for the war, and I believe—you'll hear me talk about funding for the war—and homeland security, non-discretionary spending will increase by less than 1 percent on the budget I submitted to the Congress. In other words, we're being wise with your money. But one of the places where we have increased the budget is with our first-responders—for a reason, and that is to best secure our homeland.

What has it meant, Nick? Tell me—it's your mike. You run with it like you want to run with it. Here's your chance. Cameras everywhere. [*Laughter*]

[*Nick Campasano made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me stop him there. First of all, I want to thank the Governor and thank Nick for working on this. This is a very important statement he just made, because in order to better secure the homeland, there has to be the willingness of people to share assets across city boundaries or county boundaries, State lines as well. If something were to happen in Massachusetts, I can assure you, Craig Benson would say, "Let's move some assets down there to protect." And this is a vital part of making sure the taxpayers' money is spent wisely, and I want to thank you for doing that.

It's not a given, by the way. What he just said is not a given. It sounds simple, but we're talking Government. [*Laughter*] Seriously.

[*Mr. Campasano made further remarks.*]

The President. That's great. Yes. I appreciate it. Okay, I want you to do me a favor. I want to take—I want you to thank the people who work with you for their sacrifice to this community. Please.

Mr. Campasano. I will. On behalf of the emergency responders in the State of New Hampshire, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your support.

The President. All right, thanks.

My most solemn duty and our most solemn duty in Washington is to protect the American people. And I'm going to share with you some lessons I learned. And then we'll talk to a couple of more folks, and I'll answer some questions.

Lesson one is that the enemy is ruthless and coldblooded, and you cannot negotiate with them and hope for the best. They are—they don't have a conscience. We do. These

are radical ideologues who have a hateful vision of the world and are willing to use terror to try to shake our will. That's the facts. And we've got to deal with it. And the best way to deal with them is to bring them to justice in foreign lands before they hurt us again. And that requires—[*applause*]—thank you all. Okay, thanks. Stay seated. Thank you. Thanks. Thank you all.

That requires a couple of things. It requires full utilization of all our assets. It means we've got to work with friends and allies to cut off money, to share intelligence. It means we've got to deploy brave troops. It means we've got to work with law enforcement. It means a full-scale offensive campaign and an unrelenting campaign. It's necessary to be clear-visioned and never yielding to these people.

The second lesson is that this is a different kind of war, and in order to make America more secure, we have to send a message to those who would provide safe haven for these killers. These are—they don't represent a country. These people represent an ideology. And what they look for are weak countries. They want to become the parasite, and they want the host nation to become infected with their dim vision. It's just the reality of the 21st century. And therefore, I thought it was very important to send a clear message that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you provide safe haven for these people, you're just as guilty as they are."

Now, when the American President speaks, he must do so clearly and he must mean what he says in order to make the world a more peaceful place. So I meant what I said—I meant what I said. And the Taliban didn't believe us. So we put together a coalition and removed them from power. And it's not easy work to do that, by the way. It was hard work, and I want to—if there's some troops here or families of troops here that have done this work, I want to thank them.

But I want you—let me get on—let me talk to this point real quick. Afghanistan is a better place because the Taliban has been routed, and America is safer because Al Qaida can no longer train there.

Now, let me talk about Afghanistan right quick. You might remember the incident when four women were pulled off a bus and killed because they were registering to vote or had registered to vote. And a lot of people said, "Well, gosh, this is going to stop the movement of liberty in that country." It was going to intimidate. Those people did not understand how powerful freedom is to people who have been suppressed. Do you realize that in Afghanistan over 10 million citizens have registered to vote? It is a phenomenal—10 million.

The Taliban can't stop this movement toward liberty because freedom is universal. Freedom is inherent in people's souls. They want to be free. Our job in Afghanistan is to provide enough security so they can have Presidential elections on October the 8th of this year. Think how far we have come from the days of Al Qaida being able to train and plot against the United States of America. And 3 short years later, they will have Presidential elections. Freedom is powerful in this world.

Another lesson—and this is a vital lesson, and it's an important lesson that we must never forget—is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it comes to be, before it fully materializes. That's one of the important lessons of September the 11th. This country must never forget it.

So I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. And let me tell you why I did. He was an enemy of the country. Step one in determining threats is whether or not they like us or hate us. He was an enemy. He was actually shooting missiles, weapons at our pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. In other words, he not only—we knew he was an enemy; he was taking hostile action against U.S. pilots. He harbored terrorists in his country. Remember Abu Nidal? Leon Klinghoffer? He was the guy that was murdered because he happened to be Jewish. The Abu Nidal organization was housed and based out of Baghdad. That is a terrorist organization. Zarqawi, the coldblooded person who beheads people just like that, was in and out of Baghdad. He's a terrorist. Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction. He was the kind of mentality where he not only had them; he used them against his own people. If he would use them against

his own people, wouldn't he have used them against his enemy?

And so I saw him as a threat and went to the Congress and said, "9/11 has changed the world." We must take threats seriously—and went up the Congress. And the Congress debated the issue of whether or not we ought to deal with threats seriously and in a strong resolution said, "We will deal with Saddam Hussein, and if need be, Mr. President, you've got the authorization to use force." They looked at the intelligence I looked at. My opponent looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion. He voted for the resolution.

The last choice of any President ought to be to commit troops into combat. We ought to try everything possible before we commit one soul into combat, and that's why I went to the United Nations. I said, "We see a threat. How about you?" You've passed resolutions before—resolution after resolution after resolution. And I said—so I said, "There's a new world here." After September the 11th, we must take threats seriously. And they looked at the intelligence, and they remembered the evidence of Saddam Hussein. And with a 15-to-nothing vote in the United Nations Security Council, they said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That is what the free world said.

Saddam Hussein listened to the free world again and totally ignored it. You know, I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I guess it was something along these lines: "Who cares what they say?" And so there were some discussions about, "Well, why don't we send inspectors into the country?" I thought that made sense. Before we commit troops, we ought to try everything, everything possible. And so we sent inspectors in, and as history has shown, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I have a choice to make at this point in history, whether to forget the lessons of September the 11th, take the word of a madman, or defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Is that your dad? Okay, thanks.

Let me—a couple more points I want to make to you, and then I'll be glad to answer some questions. The goal in Afghanistan and Iraq is to provide enough security so the political process can get started and to train Iraqis and Afghans so they can do the hard work of defending their freedom. That's our goal. It's in our interest to achieve that goal.

Liberty has—liberty is powerful. Liberty can transform societies. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are societies that don't export terror. Free societies are societies that listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. Liberty is a strong, strong, powerful force in this world. I believe it's transforming.

I spent time with Prime Minister Koizumi. And Laura and I were having Kobe beef with him there in Tokyo. He's the Prime Minister of a country that my dad fought against. And your dads or grandfathers fought against them too. They were an enemy. I mean it was a rough war, and here we were sitting down talking about peace. See, we were talking about the North Korean Peninsula, how best to achieve peace. It dawned on me then that, thankfully, my predecessor and others believed in the power of liberty to change an enemy into a friend. And that's what happened after World War II. There was great vision and depth of feeling about what we believe. There was the courage not to waver in the face of serious criticism. And as a result, by sticking to what we believe, Japan became a self-governing, democratic nation. And here Koizumi and I are talking about peace. It's amazing, isn't it, what liberty can do. [*Applause*]

Let me finish right quick. That's what is happening. That's why I say this is an historic moment. Someday an elected President will sit down with an elected Iraqi official talking about how to keep the peace. Liberties can transform societies. Liberty is a powerful, powerful agent of change. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Today we've got—[*applause*]—thank you all. Today—let me—okay, thanks. A couple of more points and we're going to talk to a mom whose son is there in Iraq. Just a couple of more points.

The Iraqi citizens are watching us real carefully. They want to know whether or not

we're going to stick to our word. Prime Minister Alawi is a good guy. He believes in democracy. He wants us to help. We're there to help them help themselves. That's what we're going to do. And we'll get the job done as quickly as possible, and then we'll bring our troops home, not one day longer than necessary.

Speaking about troops, Christine Burritt is with us. I'll call her Mom, because that's what 2d Lieutenant Adam Burritt calls her. Where is Adam and what does he do?

Christine Burritt. Adam is a platoon leader. He's a 2d lieutenant with the Charlie Company mountain infantry unit from Manchester, New Hampshire.

The President. Very good.

Ms. Burritt. He's stationed 40 miles north of Baghdad in a place called LSA Anaconda.

The President. Right.

Ms. Burritt. And they do convoy missions, security, and other missions as defined—which he doesn't tell his mom about.

The President. That's good—[*laughter*]—particularly with all these cameras looking at you.

Ms. Burritt. That's right.

The President. So, have you heard from Adam?

Ms. Burritt. We got an instant message from him a week ago——

The President. Oh, good.

Ms. Burritt. ——saying he was going out on the road.

The President. Right. One of the things that's really important is for me to be able to look at the moms and say, "Our Government is supporting your son so that he can complete his mission." That's why I went to the Congress and proposed an $87 billion supplemental, so that Adam would have what was needed to be able to complete his mission. That's for body armor and fuel and spare parts and health benefits and hazard pay. It's well-received on the floor of the Senate and the House—the request. As a matter, it received huge bipartisan support. That means Republicans and Democrats voted for it—so strong that only 12 Senators voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm looking you in the eye and telling you, your son is going to have what he needs. And that's important that—when you're out gathering the vote, you might remind them what the explanation was. He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, right before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] I don't remember a lot of people talking like that in New Hampshire when I was campaigning up here in 2000. The people up here are straightforward. Then they pushed him hard, and he said he was proud of the vote and finally said, "It was a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting her son in harm's way.

Got anything else you want to say? Okay, go ahead.

Ms. Burritt. The family support group from Mountain Company would like to thank you for your love, your support, and your care for our troops overseas, all the troops overseas. And just to add something to that, that yellow ribbon magnet that I gave to you earlier, we feel like those magnets are planting seeds of patriotism around the State and around the country.

The President. Well, thank you very much. What Christine—she's involved—one of the things I find out where I travel is there's all kinds of support groups, which is so strong and so American, isn't it? They've got the Mountain Family Support Group. And for those of you who are involved with supporting the families of our troops, I want to thank you for that. It means a lot. It really means a lot for people to know that our fellow citizens care about a lonely soul who may be waiting for a loved one to return.

Speaking about loved ones to return, Jackie Ceurvels is with us today. Jackie is—[*laughter*].

Jackie Ceurvels. Going to have a baby.

The President. She's going to be a mother again. [*Laughter*] All right, Jackie. We're talking about Jim.

Ms. Ceurvels. Yes.

The President. And?

Ms. Ceurvels. Jim, my husband, he is with the 172d out of Nashua. He is a squad leader with the 3d Platoon. From the beginning, we don't want him to be there—just for our reasons, selfish reasons, and he misses home.

But he feels the need—he says if we could see what he sees in Iraq, everyone would know why he's there. And he looks into the children's eyes, and he says the kids are so happy to see them come. And they help the kids out. Our family support group is in the process of sending clothes over to the Iraqi children, and our support group is also doing a rally—a Support Our Troops rally on October 16th, here in Nashua, at Greeley Park. And that is how we are all getting through it, together as a family. And we just thank everyone, and just—support our troops because they're there as their duty, and they truly believe in what they're doing over there.

The President. I appreciate you saying that. Thank you—thank you. Very good job.

Ms. Ceurvels. Thank you.

The President. I want to thank Jackie, thank Mom. We'll complete the mission. I think it's very important for the loved ones to hear from the Commander in Chief that we'll complete the mission. See, that's the best way we can honor their service, is to complete the mission, because the mission will make this world a more peaceful place. That's what we want. We long for peace. The enemy changed the dynamics, didn't they? They attacked us, and it calls us to a new duty. And the duty is to protect the country. And our duty—I believe it's our duty—is to lead the world toward peace, and that's exactly what I intend to do over the next 4 years.

So that's why I'm running. And that's why I'm asking for the vote. And now in the great New Hampshire tradition, I'll be glad to take some questions. Who's got a question?

Yes, sir. We got a mike for you right there. Okay, hold on. We need to hear this one. Now crank it up.

Defending Freedom/Tyranny

Q. Can you hear me?

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. I happen to be a Pearl Harbor survivor, and God was good to me over there.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I spent 41 months overseas. I enlisted for 2 years' foreign service, and I love my country to the bitter end. And I think you're doing a wonderful job. But just a minute—[*applause*]—just a minute. I got two young couples here that their sons are in Iraq, and they love you too.

The President. I thank you. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

I'll get you in a minute. What do you got there? You're going to give me that banner? Okay. I'm going to come over and give you a kiss on the way out. [*Laughter*] Thank you for your service.

It's interesting, isn't it—he survived Pearl Harbor. There are people today who, 30 years from now, are going to say, "I survived the attack on September the 11th." And the fundamental question is that, will we have the same determination, the same desire to defend ourselves and to spread freedom and liberty like those who survived the attacks during that era? That's the fundamental question facing this country. You know where I stand. I believe that we must never yield. I believe we must have the absolute determination and resolve to not only defend ourself but to believe in the great transforming power of liberty to make this world a better place for all of us.

The fundamental—you see, right after World War II, people said, "Well, we're not so sure the Japanese can self-govern." They were our enemy. They weren't like us. But liberty is bigger than religion. Liberty is bigger than race. You heard where I think liberty comes from. It is a powerful part of the human soul. And I believe that the people in Iraq not only want to but can self-govern. That's what Jackie said her husband has seen. He said he looks in the eyes of kids who are thrilled their liberators are there.

Let me tell you an interesting story. It's so good, I may use it next Thursday night. [*Laughter*] Ignore I said that. [*Laughter*] The Oval Office, first of all, is a powerful shrine to democracy. It's an intimidating place. There's only two people I've ever had in there that weren't intimated—or three: Barney—[*laughter*]—Judd—[*laughter*]—and Mother. [*Laughter*]

The door opens up, and in walks seven guys who have got Xs carved in their foreheads and their right hands had been cut off by Saddam Hussein's henchmen. And they came in to see me. They had been in Houston, Texas, where they had new hands put

on because of the generosity and the compassion of people who live in the free world. It was a—I'm telling you, it was a powerful moment. It was a—such a stark contrast. I said to the guy, "Why your hand—why did your hand get cut off?" He said, "Because I was a small-business owner, and the Saddam dinar had devalued, and he needed a scapegoat." See, this guy went and sold Iraqi currency to buy another currency so he could buy gold so he could make jewelry. And he just happened to have a transaction the day the dictator decided to take action and teach people a lesson, in order to cover up his own deficiencies as a tyrant and a leader.

So these guys walk in the Oval Office. You can imagine. I mean, it is—first of all, I told you, it's overwhelming. But it was overwhelming for me. I'm kind of a crier sometimes. [*Laughter*] And the contrast was so unbelievably powerful, the difference between a society where a tyrant can whimsically cut off a poor guy's hand and a society that is compassionate enough to help heal that hurt. This guy takes his pen, and he writes a prayer to America on it. I'm telling you, it is—we are saving lives and, in so doing, making the world a better place and, in so doing, making this country a more secure place.

Tyranny—you know, the fact that people starve in this globe bothers me. Do you know your country has more food for starvation around the world, by far, than any country in the world? There is a pandemic of HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa that we are leading the charge against. The United States of America has put up, by far, more money than any nation or collection of nations to help save lives. This country is leading. We're not only leading in the cause of freedom and security; we're leading in the cause of freedom by helping to defeat disease and hunger as well.

We are a compassionate nation. To whom much is given, much is required, is what I believe of the United States of America. And we are leading this world.

Let's see. Yes, ma'am. Crank her up. Start talking. They'll figure it out, yes.

Decisionmaking

Q. I'm a State rep from Nashua, New Hampshire, Mr. President. I want to thank you for being a man of action and a President of principle.

The President. Thank you. I appreciate that. How is the Governor? Has he vetoed any of your bills? [*Laughter*] No, that's good.

Q. No, I'm a great supporter of Governor Benson. I'd love to see 2 more years with the Governor.

The President. Okay, good, thank you.

Q. It's nice to have an entrepreneur in there. My question is about decisionmaking. Sir, I had a radio show in Lowell, and I had Mr. Kerry on frequently, and I never saw a man before who actually changed his mind mid-sentence, but this man does it. [*Laughter*] How do you make decisions, sir? And what do you think about the importance in this era of making a strong and swift decision?

The President. Yes, I appreciate it. That's a great question. It ought to be "the" question to people running for President. Because you know why? This is a job in which—requires a lot of decisionmaking. I make a lot of decisions. A lot of them you'll never know about. Obviously, some you do.

Step one is, a good decisionmaker is somebody who knows what he believes and knows the principles by which he'll make decisions. You just heard something I believe. I believe that liberty can transform. I believe that. It is a core part of my soul and being. So part of my decisionmaking is to adhere to principle.

Secondly, a good decisionmaker is somebody who listens well and listens to capable, smart people. One of the things that can happen in Washington, DC, is that people walk in that Oval Office, and they like to look at you and say, "Man, you're looking pretty." [*Laughter*] And you may not be so pretty. [*Laughter*] So you got to have people who walk in and tell you the truth. It's really important in Washington, DC, particularly in the complex world in which we live, is to surround yourself with capable, smart people. I have got capable, smart people. As a matter of fact, no administration has empowered more women in positions of power than

the Bush administration has done. I like people—I don't want everybody sitting around the table to feel the same way. I want them to—I want people to feel comfortable saying, "You're wrong," or "You're right," "Yes," "No." I mean, it's important to have good, constructive debate in decisionmaking.

Thirdly, you've got to be able to decide. When you get all the facts, you have to actually be able to make the decision. And when you make the decision, you've got to stand by your decision.

That's a great question. I thank you for that very much. And in Washington, DC, when you make the decision, you best have people around you who say, "Yes, sir, Mr. President," and go execute. And that's what I've got. I've got a great team and a wonderful group of people who have served our country.

Yes, ma'am, in the blue shirt. Crank it out there. They're charging up there. They got mikes—mikes to the left of you, mikes to the right of you.

Invitation to New England College

Q. My name is Sarah, and I'm actually on the e-board for the New England College chapter of College Republicans in Henniker. And we've been doing everything we can to support our candidates, and what we have is a question—well, actually, we had a lot of the other candidates come and speak, and we were hoping that maybe you and your campaign—and this is for any other candidates, our Governors, our Senators—if you would come and speak to our school and let them hear your point of view, personally.

The President. Okay. Well, I appreciate that. One option, in case I can't make it—[*laughter*]—is to, like—would you loan her a videotape of this, so she can show it, you know? [*Laughter*] We'll be back in New Hampshire. Thank you for the invitation. We'll be back a lot.

Yes, sir. One reason they were here is you had a primary. You might remember 2000; we were here a lot. [*Laughter*]

Yes, sir.

Support for Veterans

Q. Before my question I'd like to say thank you for your leadership and your strength. I appreciate it. One of the false charges from your opponents is that you've been neglecting veterans. I was wondering if you could address that criticism.

The President. Yes, thanks, I appreciate you saying that. I made a commitment to our veterans that we would support them, and we met that commitment. And let me tell you, let me just give you the facts—that our spending for veterans during the last 4 years, when they approved this budget, during the 4 years I've been President, will be bigger than the spending for veterans under my predecessor during 8 years. It's a fact. The waiting time for our veterans has been reduced substantially. Concurrent receipts for our veterans is now law, and I signed it. We are making sure that the facilities for our veterans have been updated and modernized.

No, my record on the veterans is a strong record. And one of the reasons why is I've had good support from the Members of Congress, and also I put a Secretary of Veterans Affair named Tony Principi in as the Secretary, who has done a fabulous job.

And I want to thank you for giving me a chance to talk about that. See, in Washington, one of the problems you got is, you got some good talkers. The question is, are they doers. And I'm looking forward to laying out my record on what we've accomplished, based upon the facts during the course of this campaign. We got a great record when it comes to veterans. And we'll have a great record over the next 4 years when it comes to veterans as well.

Yes, sir, what have you got?

Nancy Reagan

Q. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership, Mr. President. God bless you. It's a difficult job, and you've done a great job for us. You brought us back after 9/11. It was a tremendous blow that day, and we were emotionally crushed as a country. But you brought us back all the way. And thank you, and God bless you.

I watched the Reagan funeral, Mr. President, and a lot of what President Reagan had to deal with in bringing our country back, you have basically the same challenges, and you have the same challenges. And I was—

just wanted to know, since this is Nashua, where he was famous in saying——

The President. Yes, I remember that one well. [*Laughter*] Something about a microphone. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, how is Mrs. Reagan doing? I know you met with her.

The President. Thanks for asking, yes. She's doing great. Laura and I dropped by to see her. Thanks for the question. She is a very strong woman, and we admire her a lot. We went by to see her in her beautiful home in Los Angeles. She was—her spirits were up, after what had been a very difficult period in her life. Although I will tell you, the outpouring of support and love for President Reagan really lifted her spirits. I mean, it was a tremendous show of support for the guy she loved.

Yes, ma'am. No question about her; she loved him. She loved Ronald Reagan a lot, and the country obviously loved him too. And it helped her a lot. We loved him. She had some beautiful trees she was showing us. It was an unbelievable yard, by the way. It was spectacular. [*Laughter*]

Veterans/Supporters of the President

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I actually—I wanted to give you a little bit of what you said you want. I appreciate so much what you've done for the veterans. We still have a ways to go on the concurrent receipt. What you've done, we are most grateful for. You've made a great start on America keeping her promise to her veterans. I just want you to know that there is—a group drove today from as far away as they could in New Hampshire, troops' families. And this little girl, when you asked her if that was her dad, that was her granddad that is in Afghanistan. Her uncle is in Iraq. Her mother is on the U.S.S. *Harry Truman*. Her other uncle has already been to Iraq and is being deployed. And this is their grandma who is watching them so their mother can serve.

The President. Fantastic.

Q. And I was just—we also brought—we brought a lot of special supporters today. Do we have a—Blue Stars over there? We brought a lot of families that wanted to come to show you their support today for what you're doing for their families in Iraq. And in addition, we have Ellen Goodchild, whose daughter was on the second plane into the World Trade Center, that is a huge supporter of yours. And we want to thank you for all of that support.

The President. Well, thanks. God bless. Yes, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Yes, ma'am. Go ahead and yell it out. The U.S.S. *George H.W. Bush*. That's pretty powerful. It fits well.

Progress in Afghanistan

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Career sailor, right.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. She wants to know whether or not we're making progress. That's what she wants to know. You bet we are. Ten million people have registered to vote; young girls are going to school. I'll tell you an interesting story. My barber in Washington, DC, Zyra, she goes out and she raises $300,000 to build schools in Afghanistan. New schools are opening up. I think she told me yesterday—I hope it looks like I got a good haircut—[*laughter*]—that the schools will have 7,000 kids.

So a major accomplishment is—you've got to know—and it's hard to envision or believe this is the truth—many young girls were not allowed to go to school. That's the way the Taliban viewed the world. That's the kind of vision of these people we're defeating. That's what they believe. They believe that girls shouldn't go to school. They believe that if you have a difference of opinion on religion, you're taken out into the public square and flogged. That's what they believe.

I'm in—so I'm in Cleveland, Ohio, to kick off the International Children's Games. And a bunch of kids there, and I'm standing up there ready to talk, and right to my right, right on the front row, was the Afghanistan girls soccer team. You know, there is an accomplishment there. These kids would no more have been in the United States of America to play soccer had we not made the decision we made.

I'll tell you a couple of other examples. Prior to September the 11th and prior to our actions, the leader of Libya had a weapons-of-mass-destruction program. And he heard a clear message and voluntarily got rid of his

weapons-of-mass-destruction program. There is an action that took place as a result of the actions we have taken to uphold doctrine and to secure ourself.

Prior to September the 11th, Pakistan was friendly with the Taliban. And that could have been a very dangerous circumstance. Because of our action and because of our leadership, President Musharraf is an ally in the war on terror now. He's helping to chase down Al Qaida in remote regions of his country. He's helping to secure his borders as best as he can against the Taliban from infiltrating to kill people who are getting involved in the election. In other words, the world is changing, and it's going to change more as we continue to spread freedom.

A trouble spot in the Middle East is, obviously, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We're strong supporters of Israel. Israel is our ally. And I believe the best way to bring peace to that part of the world is for a Palestinian State, based upon democracy, to emerge. And so our vision is two states living side by side in peace. A free Iraq will serve as a powerful example to the Palestinian people that there's a better hope for them. See, freedom and the example of freedom will empower women and reformers and exiles and people who have been put in prison. It will show that—what's possible.

And I think it's a vital part of making sure this world is more peaceful over the long run. There are some success stories, and we're just getting started. There's more work—that's what I'm here to tell you. We've done a lot, but there's more to do. There's more to do to make this world a better place.

Yes, ma'am.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You did? She went to Libya, she said. Were you on the shores of Tripoli?

Q. [*Inaudible*]—and I share their curiosity—oh, thank you. How can Ariel Sharon, as you've said, be a man of peace if he causes death and torture among innocent Palestinians every day? How can Ariel Sharon be a man of peace if he fits your definition of a terrorist? I'd be curious to hear how you plan to carry out the two-state solution.

The President. Yes, good. No, that's a great question. First of all, Ariel Sharon is defending his country against terrorist attacks, just like we will. He has made the conscious decision that a Palestinian state is in his nation's best interests. He's made that decision. Now, how do you—the right question is, how do you carry out the two-state solution. That's what we have the roadmap for. The roadmap says, here are the steps necessary in order for a Palestinian state to emerge.

I also believe there's a leadership question involved with whether or not a Palestinian state will emerge. See, I think in order for a Palestinian state to emerge, there must be leadership that believes in the hopes and aspirations of the people and are willing to put institutions in place that are larger than mankind—in other words, willing to have a system based upon law and institutions that survive the people, as opposed to a system in which one person pretty well dictates the fate of the Palestinian people.

And so the real challenge is to not only stay on the roadmap, which is institution-building—and, by the way, there's also a commitment to fight off terror—but it's for leadership to emerge that is committed to the aspirations of the people.

Ariel Sharon is a duly elected official in a democracy. In other words, Israel is a democracy. We would hope that the Palestinians would have that same kind of democracy, which would lead to a more peaceful world.

Yes, ma'am.

Small Business and Health Care

Q. Okay, I'm going to appear to be sophisticated, but I'm a wreck.

The President. That's what I try to do too. I try to be sophisticated and—[*laughter*]—I have trouble pulling it off, though, you know? [*Laughter*]

Q. I do want to say it's an honor to be here today to meet you, Mr. President. Okay—and New Hampshire chicks love you. I got to say that.

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*] So far you haven't acted very sophisticated, I admit it, you know? [*Laughter*]

Q. And if I knew nothing about politics, I would vote for you because of your moral values.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I'm bringing it back to the health care.

The President. Okay.

Q. My husband and I are small-business owners in New Hampshire. My daughter is here with me today, and her husband also is. I'm a breast cancer survivor of 10 years. That's the good news. The bad news is, we don't have health insurance. For me to have it would be $1,200 a year. Now, I did hear—and you touched on that a little bit.

The President. Health savings accounts—yes.

Q. I have made phone calls for 3 years and have gotten nowhere at all. And I wanted to know, as a small-business owner, what can we do as small-business owners to make a difference so that we can also be insured?

The President. Sure. I appreciate that. Well, first of all, let me explain health savings accounts to you. And the reason why you've called for the last 3 years and nothing has happened is because they haven't been available until I signed the Medicare reform law. And that's part of the new law. There was something called medical savings accounts, but these health savings accounts replaced them. And I really think you ought to look into them. And I don't know if it will solve your particular issue, but it is a big difference in terms of cost of premium. And it also makes sure that, as I say, you're a part of the decisionmaking process, you're directly involved with what you spend and what you spend it on.

Secondly, association health plans are a very important way to enable small businesses to pool risk. Now, what is your small—what do you do?

Q. Heating and air-conditioning.

The President. Heating and air-conditioning.

Q. Heating and air-conditioning.

The President. Well, see, here's the problem and—is that you're not able to spread your risk across enough employees to be able to get insurance at a—yes, two, that's not a lot. So I think you ought to be able to take your business and pool together with other heating and air-conditioning businesses, whether they be in New Hampshire or in Maryland or in Texas or in California, so you've got more economies of risk. In other words, you've got—if you've got two employees you're trying to insure, your premium is going to be much higher than if you had a thousand employees you were spreading risk across. That's how it works. Insurance premiums are based upon risk and the spreading of risk. And so that's what—when I'm talking about what they call association health plans, admittedly it's kind of long Washington words—what that really means is, is that heating and air-conditioning companies of like size or small businesses can pool risk. And it's necessary, and it's an important part of you being able to find affordable insurance.

You know, it's a very interesting point. You say, "We're having trouble finding affordable insurance." The issue is cost. That's the issue. It's how do we control the cost of insurance. One way to do so is to spread risk, is how you control cost. If you've got two people to insure, you're going to pay more than if you have 1,000.

A second way to control cost is what I told you about medical liability reform. I'm telling you, your premiums are high because of junk lawsuits. And I'll tell you why they're high because of junk lawsuits. A doctor says, "I'm getting ready to practice medicine on you, and because the lawsuits are around, I'm likely to get hauled into court. Therefore, I'm going to practice more medicine than I should practice." It's called the defensive practice of medicine. In other words, he kind of shields himself or herself from a lawsuit. And therefore, the defensive practice of medicine, plus the fact that they're getting sued, runs your premiums up.

Now look, I believe people ought to have their day in court. If you get harmed, you ought to have your day in court. But we need a system that's fair and balanced. And so—you know, when I first went to Washington, these Governors—one ex-Governor, three—two are sitting Governors—would say, you know, maybe it's none of your business in Washington, DC, on medical liability reform. Maybe this is a State prerogative. And I thought maybe they were right until I looked

at what the cost of rising premiums and defensive medicine costs the Federal taxpayer. Remember, we pay a lot of money on Medicare. We pay a lot of money for the veterans. We pay a lot of money on Medicaid. And therefore, these lawsuits are running up the cost to the Federal taxpayer.

So I said, "This is a Federal issue," and went to the Congress. Of course, we get it passed out of House, and it gets stuck in the Senate. I'll tell you why it's stuck in the Senate. The plaintiff's bar are one of the most powerful—is one of the most powerful special interests in Washington, DC. Make no mistake about it. You try to get tort reform out of the United States Senate, it gets shut down just like that because of the special interests in Washington.

So there are two ways to help you be able to afford a better plan—three ways, excuse me—HSAs, association health plans, medical liability reform. Those are three ways that will help reduce the cost of medicine and give you a chance to get a product that you can afford. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Yes, sir. Final question. This has got to be the last question because Laura and I are headed to Motown. That would be Detroit.

Prayers for the President

Q. God bless you, Mr. President.

The President. He has, thank you.

Q. Youngest of 11, 7 boys, all served in the military.

The President. Fantastic.

Q. The only thing I wanted to say—I don't have a question for you because you and I are on the same page, but I want you to go out throughout the country, and every time you ask for a vote, you ask for our prayers.

The President. Thank you, sir. I appreciate that very much. I appreciate you saying that. Let me conclude on this note. I appreciate that very much. That is a—you know something about this country—amazing thing is I don't have to ask for the prayers. You know why? The people are praying anyway. And I want to thank you for your prayers. I appreciate that very much.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at Nashua High School North. In his remarks, he referred to Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; Gov. Craig R. Benson of New Hampshire and his wife, Denise; Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife, Ann; Kathleen MacLellan Gregg, wife of Senator Judd Gregg; Mayor Bernard A. Streeter of Nashua, NH; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks in Taylor, Michigan

August 30, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. You know something—Bo knows Michigan, and he just told me we're going to carry this State, and I agree. I want to thank you all for coming. It is great to be here in Taylor, Michigan.

Laura and I are thrilled to be here, home of the WNBA champs; it's the home of the NBA champs. More importantly, it's the home of really decent people, good, hard-working American citizens, and I'm proud to be in your midst. I'm here to ask for your vote.

That's what we're doing. We're traveling your important State asking for the vote. I'm here to tell you I've got some—more to do to make this country a safer place and a more hopeful place for every American. But perhaps the most important reason to put me back in is so that Laura will have 4 more years. I'm proud of her. I love her dearly. She's a great mom, a wonderful wife, and a terrific First Lady.

And I'm proud to be standing by Bo. What a great man Bo Schembechler is. He is a strong, honorable citizen of this great State. You know, a few weeks ago, when my opponent was campaigning in Ohio, he said, "There's nothing better than Buckeye football, period."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Then he came over here to Michigan, and he said, "I just go for Buckeye football."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The Preside..t. It's a good thing Bo wasn't there. Then he remembered where he was,

and he called an audible. [*Laughter*] He said that the University of Michigan was a powerhouse team. You see, I'm running against a fellow who is a Washington politician, who has taken both sides of just about every issue, and now we can add Big Ten football to that list.

I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney, a fine man. He—I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] But I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him for his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people that are out putting up the signs and making the phone calls. Not only are we here to ask for the vote, we're here to ask for your help. I believe we have a duty in this country to vote. I believe all of us have an obligation to go to the polls. I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors. Give them a chance to vote. And then when you get them headed to the polls—[*laughter*]—remind them that if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In the past few years, we have been through a lot together, and we've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead this Nation forward. I am here to let you know that we have a plan to make this a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm here to ask for your vote and your help. You see, there is more to do. There is more work to be done.

We've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be. When we came to office 3 years ago, too many of our children were being shuffled through school, grade by grade, year after year, without learning the basics. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're reforming our public schools by demanding high standards, accountability, and local control of schools. My administration will challenge those schools that will not teach and will not change. We want no child left behind in America.

There is more work to be done to maintain this path to excellence. We'll make sure there's more math and science in our high school classrooms so our kids will be prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. We'll make sure technology is in our classrooms. We want a high school diploma to mean something. What I'm telling you, after 4 more years, a rising generation of Americans will have the skills and confidence necessary to realize the great dreams of the American system.

We got more to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. You might remember the old Medicare debate. Campaign after campaign, politicians came around and said, "Oh, we're going to fix Medicare." But it was called "Mediscare." People didn't want to deal with it, but the system was failing our seniors. In order to make sure our seniors have got prescription drug coverage, which they will in 2006, I led the United States Congress to strengthen Medicare, and our health care is better for the seniors of this country.

We've expanded community health centers for low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. There's more work to be done. We'll introduce technologies into the health care to hold down costs.

Most Americans get their health care through their jobs. Most new jobs are created by small businesses, and many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. The best way to enable American families to get health care is to allow small businesses to pool resources together so they can buy insurance at the same discount big businesses can.

In order to make sure you've got good health care here in Michigan, we need to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running docs out of businesses and raising your costs. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-hospital, pro-patient, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his

choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care here in this country, we will make sure the health decisions are made by patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'm running because I know we've got more work to do to keep this economy growing. You might remember what our economy has been through during the last 3½ years. We've been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals. By the way, it's now clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We've been through the terror attack, all of which affected job creation here in America.

But we're overcoming those obstacles. We're overcoming it because we've got great workers in America. We're overcoming them because our farmers and ranchers are good at what they do. We're overcoming them because the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong. We're also overcame them because of well-timed tax cuts.

When it came time to reduce taxes, we did it the fair way. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." We raised the child credit to help our families. We reduced the marriage penalty. The Tax Code sends the wrong message. We ought to be encouraging marriage in America, not discouraging marriage. We helped our small businesses. This time, the check actually was in the mail.

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added over 1.5 million jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent, well below the national average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

There is still more work to be done here in Michigan. The recovery has lagged here. And so as long as anybody is looking for a job, I'll work to make sure the environment for job creation is strong.

See, in order to make sure jobs are here in America, we need an energy policy. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I submitted a plan to the United States Congress that encourages conservation, encourages research on alternative sources of energy, encourages the use of coal in environmentally friendly ways, exploring for natural gas. But in all we do, we better make sure that we no longer have to beg for energy from other parts of the world. This country can do a better job.

We've got to make sure regulations are fair and reasonable on the employers of America. To keep jobs here in this country, we need reasonable automobile policies. American automobile makers are making the cleanest cars and trucks in history. We can do more. My administration has worked with manufacturers to set wise fuel efficiency standards. We will cut air pollution from diesel vehicles by more than 90 percent. My opponent has taken a different approach. He's consistently supported arbitrary, unfair fuel standards that could cost Michigan thousands of jobs and makes our cars less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now it's campaign time here in this great State, and he's shifted into reverse. [*Laughter*] Says he's not committed to drastically increasing efficiency standards. You know, he hasn't sounded this confused since he tried to decide if he owns an SUV.

In order to make sure jobs are here, we want to make sure that we're treated fairly around the world. Listen, our markets are open, and that's good for Michigan consumers. You've got more choices to choose from. You're going to get better price and better quality. What I'm saying is, is that we're treating you one way; you treat us the same way. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level.

In order to make sure jobs stay here in America, we will expand our access to our community colleges so workers are able to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. In order to keep jobs here in America, we'll be wise about how we spend your money. See, I think the Federal Government ought to set priorities and let you keep your own money. You can spend your money far better than the Federal Government can.

In order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to keep your taxes low. Running up taxes on the American people will hurt this economic recovery. We have a difference of opinion in this race. My opponent went

out there, and he's already promised about $2 trillion in new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We've still got September and October to go. [*Laughter*] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? You know what that means. The rich dodge, and you pay. But we're not going to let him. We're going to carry Michigan and this country in November.

We have more to do——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have more to do. We've got more to do to wage and win the war on terror. Our future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. I don't know if you know this or not, but over 10 million people have registered to vote in the upcoming Afghan Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He attacked his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He and his henchmen murdered thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. I saw a threat.

After September the 11th—one of the lessons of September the 11th, an important lesson that this country must never forget, is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. And so I went to the United States Congress. I said, "We see a threat." The Congress looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history of Saddam, and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force. My opponent came to the same conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force.

The last option of a President is the use of military. And so, therefore, I went to the United Nations in the hopes that we could solve this problem diplomatically, that we could deal with this threat through diplomatic means. There was a debate in the United Nations, and the Security Council of the United Nations voted unanimously to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." The world spoke with united voice about the threat of Saddam Hussein.

But as he had over a decade, he chose to defy the demands of the free world. He ignored the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, he systematically deceived them. So I had a choice to make: either forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the word of a madman, or take action to defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Even though we did not find the stockpiles we expected to find, Saddam had the capability of making weapons and could have passed that capability on to the enemy. That was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Given what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has now found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we haven't found the stockpiles we all thought were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I appreciate the fact that he cleared that up. [*Laughter*] But I do want to remind you, there are still 64 days for him to change his mind again.

I'm running because I know we've got more to do to defend this country. We must continue to work with friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. After September the 11th, you just can't hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We have put together a strong coalition to help us defeat the enemy. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan; some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. During the next 4 years, we will continue to build on these alliances, call upon our friends to work in concert to make us more secure. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We will keep our commitments to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. We will help them become democratic and peaceful societies. It's in our national interest that they do so. These nations are now governed by two strong leaders who believe in the aspirations of their people. We've got a clear goal in those countries, countries that will be allies in the war on terror, countries that are headed down the road to democracy.

Our troops are helping to stabilize those countries. More importantly, they're helping to train Afghan citizens and Iraq citizens so they can do the hard work, so they can fight off the terrorists, so they can realize their dreams of a free society. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

And we will prevail. One of the reasons we'll prevail is because we've got a fantastic United States military. I've seen—I've had the privilege of meeting with them around our country and all around the world. I've seen their decency and their unselfish courage. I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting such a fine example for those who wear our uniform.

I made a commitment to those who wear our uniform and to the loved ones of those who wear the uniform, that they will have the resources they need to fight and win this war against the terrorists. I went to the United States Congress last September and proposed supplemental funding to support our troops in their missions in Afghanistan and in Iraq. This legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was necessary funding. We received great bipartisan support for the funding request. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And so they say—asked him why. He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." Then they pressed him further, and he said, well, he was proud of his vote. Then they pressed him even further, and he said, "Well, the whole thing is a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq, a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a part of

the world that is desperate for freedom. Free nations do not export terror. Free nations listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. By serving the cause of liberty, we're helping others, but we're making America more secure. By serving the cause of liberty, we are spreading the peace.

Laura and I were having dinner one evening with the Prime Minister of Japan in Tokyo. He's a fellow who's running a country that my dad was at war with. So was your dads and granddads. They were the enemy. But after World War II, my predecessors and others had this great, deep faith that liberty could transform societies, that liberty could convert an enemy into a friend. And they stood strong on those values.

The Prime Minister and I were talking about the peace. We were talking about how to work together to make the world a more peaceful place. By standing the line for what we believe in, by holding true to our values, someday an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We've got more to do to protect this country. I'm running because I understand there's an enemy out there that still lurks. They hate what we stand for. You know, we have a difference of opinion on these terrorists. My opponent said that going to war with them is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I'm sure you've heard that before. I believe the logic is upside-down. I think it shows that people don't understand the nature of these folks. See, during the 1990s, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before America went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. You don't create terrorists by fighting back. You defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

There's a lot of really good people at the Federal level and the State level and local level who are working hard to protect you. We reorganized the homeland defenses into the Department of Homeland Security to better communicate, to better respond. We're making needed reforms in our intelligence-gathering. It is essential that we renew the PATRIOT Act so our law enforcement officials have the tools necessary to disrupt the terrorist cells. We're doing more to protect our borders and our ports.

We're working hard, but reform in Washington isn't easy. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, a lot of people who say, "I love the status quo." It's not enough to advocate reform; you've got to be able to get the job done. So when you're out gathering the vote, remind people that when it comes to reforming the schools and raising the standards and closing the achievement gap, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms to give our families and seniors more access and more choices, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving this economy so people can find work, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing the homeland and defeating the terrorists and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. When you're out there campaigning, remind people, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

You know, we're living in exciting times. We really are. But they're times of change, and change can be unsettling for American families and workers. That's why I believe so strongly in promoting an ownership society in America. We want people owning their own health care accounts that they can take from job to job. We want people owning their own retirement accounts. Listen, baby boomers like me are just fine when it comes to Social Security. But for you younger workers out there, look carefully at the rhetoric during this campaign. Look carefully at the fiscal solvency of the Social Security system. I believe younger workers ought to have the option of taking some of their own money and putting it in personal savings accounts that they can call their own.

We want more people owning their own business in America. You know, one of the most hopeful statistics at the beginning of the 21st century is the homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. We'll continue to promote homeownership in America. I love the fact that somebody opens up

their door to their house and says, "Welcome to my home. This is my piece of property." I believe strongly in ownership, because I know if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

In these changing times of ours, however, there are some things that won't change, the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. Our beliefs won't change, in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. During changing times, we must support the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in America, where every person counts and every person matters. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in this country. You know, the culture is changing from one that had said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for supporting your teachers and doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

Today I got off Air Force One and met Annie Kaigler. She is—she works for the foster grandparent program. She is a volunteer. She takes time out of her life to mentor children. She takes time out of her life to change America one heart at a time. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. During the next 4 years, I will continue to rally the armies of compassion so this country can be a great, hopeful place.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a great belief in the values that make us a great country.

None of us will ever forget that day when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." A fellow grabbed me by the arm as I was trying to thank people, and he looked me right in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down."

I have a duty that goes on for this country. I wake up every morning trying to—how best to secure this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have come through much together. We've done a lot of hard work, but there's more to do. Over the next 4 years, we'll spread ownership and opportunity and hopes throughout every corner of this country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to a young generation. We will continue to spread freedom and peace.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I said if I had the great honor of serving the American people as your President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. With your help, with your hard work and help, I will do so for the next 4 years.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at Heritage Park. In his remarks, he referred to Bo Schembechler, former head coach, University of Michigan football team; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks to the American Legion Convention in Nashville, Tennessee

August 31, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for having me. And thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you all. I'm honored to be here at your 86th national convention.

I—there's another convention going on in New York you might have heard about. [*Laughter*] Tomorrow they're going to choose a Presidential nominee. I think I got the inside track. [*Laughter*] I'm taking nothing for granted, however. I'm taking nothing for granted, so Laura headed to New York this morning to make my case, but I do want you to know she sends her very best regards.

I also want to let you know that Americans' veterans are the heart and soul of this Nation. When freedom was under threat, you risked your lives in places like Omaha Beach and Okinawa, Keshan, Kandahar, and Baghdad. Because you served, Americans live in freedom. I'm proud to stand before you as your Commander in Chief and look in the eye and say, America is grateful for your service.

And America is grateful for the service of Senator John McCain. He gave a great speech last night in New York. He's a great American. He's a great American who gave his Nation some of the most difficult and distinguished service in the history of our military. He fought for America. He suffered for America. He returned for honor, and his service continues today. I'm proud to have John McCain with us and standing by my side.

I have enjoyed working with the national commander, John Brieden. Maybe we got along so well because we both speak the same language—[*laughter*]—Texan. [*Laughter*] But he served this august body with class and dignity, and I'm proud of your service, John. Thank you, sir. And I was pleased to be introduced by Katherine Morris as well. She too speaks Texan. [*Laughter*] I want to thank her for her leadership as the American Legion Auxiliary national president.

I'm pleased to be here with my friend Tony Principi, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I want to thank Les Brownlee who is with us, the Acting Secretary of the Army.

I appreciate the mayor of this great city of Nashville joining us. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming.

I appreciate Congressman Cooper from the State of Tennessee for joining us.

Most of all, I want to thank the Legion members who have been so gracious in your hospitality. Thank you and the Auxiliary members for welcoming me.

Since your founding, the American Legion has always been faithful to God and to country. You served our Nation in uniform, and you still serve today. When Hurricane Charley hit Florida a few weeks ago, American Legion posts gathered food and helped neighbors in need. In moments of crisis, Americans know Legionnaires always come through.

Members of the American Legion and the Auxiliary are also serving your neighbors every day, volunteering in veterans hospitals, sponsoring scout troops and youth baseball, and collecting scholarship money for deserving students. You've started a scholarship fund for the children of troops killed since September the 11th, 2001, in the war on terror. Our country owes these families so much, and I thank you for showing the gratitude and the good heart of the United States of America.

The most important gift you give our country is the example you set for the men and women of our Armed Forces. In Afghanistan and Iraq and other fronts in the war on terror, today's service men and women are carrying on your legacy of selfless service and courage under fire. I know you share America's pride in them. They are serving our country with pride, and they are bringing honor to the uniform.

Our fighting men and women are serving America under a proud flag, and that flag should be cherished and protected. When John and your national adjutant general, Bob, have come by the Oval Office, they always remind me about the Citizens Flag Alliance. I appreciate your leadership in that important alliance. Like you, I support a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from desecration. I think John McCain put it best when he said, "American blood has been shed all over the world for the American flag, and I believe it deserves respect."

Our Nation's veterans have made serving America the highest priority of your lives. And that is why I have made serving our Nation's veterans one of the highest priorities of my administration. To make sure my administration fulfills the commitment I have made to America's veterans, I selected one really fine man in Tony Principi. I am proud of the job that our Secretary is doing.

Thanks in large part to Tony's leadership, my administration has a solid record of accomplishment for our veterans. When my 2005 budget request is approved by Congress, we will have increased overall funding for our Nation's veterans by almost $20 billion or 40 percent since 2001. We have increased funding for our veterans more in 4 years than the previous administration did in 8 years. We have increased VA medical care funding by 41 percent over the last 4 years. We're bringing care to more veterans more quickly. Since 2001, we have enrolled 2.5 million more veterans in health care services. We have increased outpatient visits from 44 million to 54 million. We've increased the number of prescriptions filled from 98 million to 116 million. We've reduced the backlog of disability claims by about a third. We will reduce it even further. We have cut the average time it takes to process disability claims by 70 days. We're getting the job done for our veterans.

We have focused resources on veterans who need it most, those with service-related disabilities and low incomes and special needs. We've established a new scheduling system to make certain that veterans seeking care for a service-connected condition are the first in line.

For more than a century, Federal law prohibited disabled veterans from receiving both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. Combat-injured and severely disabled veterans deserve better. I was the first President in over 100 years to sign concurrent receipt legislation.

My administration has launched a $35 million program to provide housing and health care and other support services to homeless veterans. No veteran who served in the blazing heat or bitter cold of foreign lands should have to live without shelter, exposed to the elements, in the very country whose freedom they fought for.

We are modernizing VA health centers and building new ones, especially in the South and West where increasing numbers of our veterans live. Since 2001, we have opened 194 new community-based clinics nationwide. Through the CARES Initiative we're providing $1 billion and have requested another half-billion for next year to modernize VA facilities and to provide better care for veterans in areas where the need is growing. When it comes to providing first-class care for our veterans, we are getting the job done.

Our Nation's debt extends not just to the veterans who served but to the families who supported them in war and depend on them today. So last December, I signed the Veterans Benefits Act, authorizing $1 billion in new and expanded benefits for disabled veterans, surviving spouses, and their children.

We meet today at a time of war for our country, a war we did not start, yet one that we will win. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, 2001, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. I don't know whether you know this or not, but over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the coming October Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls now go to school for the first time. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was

defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He had harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He and his henchmen murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of instability in the world's most volatile region. Saddam Hussein was a threat.

After September the 11th, one of the lessons this country must always remember is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. So I went to the United States Congress, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, looked at the intelligence and looked at the background and came to the same conclusion: Saddam Hussein was a threat.

Before a President ever commits troops, we must try all other alternatives to deal with threats. And so I went to the United Nations. I said to the free world, "Saddam Hussein is a threat." They looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion with a 15-to-nothing vote in U.N. Security Council. They said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." The world had spoken.

But as he had for over a decade. Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He ignored the demands of the United Nations. As a matter of fact, when we sent inspectors—or when the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend our country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we thought we would find, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to the enemy, and that was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

We will continue to work with friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home. In this different kind of war, we may never sit down at a peace table. But make no mistake about it, we are winning, and we will win. We will win by staying on the offensive. We will win by spreading liberty. We believe that liberty can transform nations from tyranny into peaceful nations.

And so we'll keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will help them become peaceful and democratic countries that are allies in the war on terror. Those countries are now governed by strong leaders who believe in the aspirations of their people. We'll help them in the political process. More importantly, we will train Afghan citizens and Iraqi citizens so they can defend their own country against a few who would stop the wishes of the many. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

We're doing the hard work of securing our country and spreading the peace, and those commitments are made by the men and women of our military. I've had the privilege of traveling to bases around our country and around the world. I've met with those who defend our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

And those who wear our uniform deserve the full support of the Government. For the past years my administration has strengthened our military. We enacted the largest increases in defense spending since Ronald Reagan served as the Commander in Chief. We've increased military pay by nearly 21 percent. We provided for better housing, for better training, for better maintenance.

Last September, when our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and in Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment,

hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was important funding. We received great bipartisan support for that funding. All but 12 United States Senators voted to support our troops in combat. My opponent chose to vote no on that vital legislation. When asked, he said, "Well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, right before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] When further pressed, he said he was proud of his vote, and then he said it was a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in part of the world that is desperate for freedom. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and we're making our country more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we are making the world more peaceful, and by serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We have more work to do to defend our freedom and to protect our country. For decades, America's Armed Forces abroad have essentially remained where the wars of the last century ended, in Europe and Asia. Much of America's current force posture was designed to protect us and our allies from Soviet aggression, a threat that no longer exists. And that's why I announced a plan to transform our global force posture, the numbers, types, locations, and capabilities of U.S. forces around the world.

This new plan will help us fight and win the war on terror. This new plan will help us deal with the threats of the 21st century. It will strengthen our alliances while we build new partnerships to better preserve the peace. It will reduce the stress on our troops and on our military families. It will save the taxpayers money, as we consolidate and close bases and facilities overseas no longer needed to face the threats of our time and defend the peace and freedom of the world.

This plan was carefully crafted over more than 3 years in close consultation with friends and allies around the world. We will have a presence, but we'll have a smarter presence to promote the peace.

Within hours after I announced this plan, my opponent came out against it, and that's his right to do so. After all, it's a campaign. He's allowed to say what he believes. The only problem is that he endorsed the idea just 17 days earlier. [*Laughter*] On August the 1st, he said, "I think we can significantly change the deployment of troops, not just in Iraq but elsewhere in the world, the Korean Peninsula, perhaps, Europe, perhaps. There are great possibilities open to us, but this administration has very little imagination." Well, it takes a lot of imagination to come out against a position you took just 17 days earlier. [*Laughter*]

This world has changed a great deal since many of you have worn the Nation's uniform. Today, our troops have the most advanced technologies at their disposal. Weapons are more lethal and precise than any that were available for you. Yet, their success in the war on terror is made possible by the same things that made your success possible, personal courage, dedication to duty, and love of our great country.

As our troops serve today in Baghdad and Mosul and the Hindu Kush Mountains and around the world, I know American veterans feel a special pride in them. They're carrying on your legacy of sacrifice and service. They're determined to see the mission through. America is proud of them. America will stand with them.

I want to thank you for standing by our men and women in uniform. Thank you for your idealism. Thank you for your example. Thank you for your dedication to God and country, and thank you for having me here. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Robert W. Spanogle, national adjutant, American Legion; Mayor William Purcell of Nashville, TN; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks at the Farm Progress Show in Alleman, Iowa

August 31, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. It's great to be back in the great State of Iowa. As you can see, I'm traveling in pretty good company. Speaking about people who gave a great speech last night, John McCain did exactly what I hoped he would do, which is set the message straight about our record in fighting this war on terror. I'm proud to call John a friend. He is, in fact, a hero, as Glen said, and he's a great United States Senator from the State of Arizona. Thanks for coming, John. I'm proud to be with you.

It's good to be here at the Farm Show. You know, some people think you can find the heart and soul of America in Hollywood. I think you find it right here in Iowa, and I appreciate you coming out to say hello.

I wish Laura were here. She's getting ready. She's warming up for her speech tonight. [*Laughter*] She's getting ready to talk to the Nation, and I'm glad she is. She's a great mom, a wonderful wife, and she's a great First Lady for this country. I'm really proud of her—really proud of her. I'm going to be talking to you today about why I think you ought to put me in there for 4 more years. But perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I want to thank my friend Glen Keppy. He's the chairman of the Farmers for Bush campaign here in this great State. It's a vital position because you got a lot of farmers here. [*Laughter*] He's a good man. He's been a friend for a long time. I said, "Would you help me get out and get my message out in the ag community?" He said, "You bet." He said, "Why don't you come over here to the Farm Show. Maybe a couple of people will show up and say hello." I'm glad you're here, Glen, and thank you for putting this on. I want to thank all the people who have organized this great event.

I appreciate Karen Nussle is here. She's the wife of my friend Congressman Jim Nussle.

I'm sorry Senator Grassley is not here. He's a good one. I enjoy working with him. We're getting a lot done together for Iowa, and I appreciate working with Chuck. I remember campaigning in your State a lot. Every time I'd go with him he'd say, "Oh, Farmer Jones lives here," and then you'd go down the road about another mile, and he'd know the name of that farmer; then he'd know the name of that farmer's wife. He probably knows everyone here names too. [*Laughter*] That's because he loves his State. He's doing a fine job.

I appreciate the mayor, Mayor Bodenstiner, for being here. Mayor, I appreciate you coming. I think the only thing I'd suggest is you make sure you fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you, though, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for your service.

I know my friend Stew Iverson is here, of the State senate. I know we've got a lot of local officials and State officials here. Thank you for serving, and thank you for coming.

There's members of the ex-Governors club here. I'm one of those members. Terry Branstad and Bob Ray are with us, and I'm honored they are here—fine friends and great people.

My friend Stan Thompson is running for the United States Congress, and I hope you give him a good look. He's a good fellow.

Jan Lyons, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, is with us. They have given me their endorsement. I am honored to be endorsed by the Cattlemen of the United States of America. Got the corn growers represented here by Len Corzine. I appreciate Len coming. I appreciate all the corn growers being here too, by the way. Ron Heck, the chairman of the American Soybean Association, is with us. I appreciate Ron coming. I want to thank Keith Berry, whose pork people are here, pork grower—hog raisers—[*laughter*]—Pork Producers Council. I want to thank Craig Lang, who is the President of the Iowa Farm Bureau.

Most of all, I want to thank you for coming. I'm here to let you know I'm asking for your vote. I believe you got to get out—[*applause*].

I got more work to do on behalf of the American people. You know, we've got a really good record. We've done a lot in office, and we've come through a lot together. But there's only one reason to look back, and that

is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to let you know I've got more to do to make this country safer and America a more hopeful place, and I'd like your help. I'd like you to go to your friends and neighbors and remind them, in a democracy we have a duty to vote. In this great country, we have an obligation, in my judgment, as citizens to go to the polls. And the first step is to register people.

So if you don't mind, as we're coming down the stretch, why don't you find friends and neighbors and say, "As an—you got an obligation as an American to vote, and so, register to vote." And then when you're heading them to the polls and you get them going our way—[*laughter*]—tell them if they want a stronger America, a safer America, and a better America, to put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm running with a good man in Vice President Cheney. I admit it, he's not the prettiest face on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I did not pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his sound advice, his great experience, and because he can get the job done.

I'm running because we—I know we've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence they can be. You know, 3 years ago, when we got into office, there was too many of our kids getting shuffled through the school, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we challenged what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We're willing to challenge schools that will not teach and will not change. Every child in America deserves an excellent education.

I'm running again because I know we've got to do more to make health care available and affordable. You might remember that old Medicare debate. They called it "Mediscare." People would talk about it, but nobody would touch it. I was worried that the Medicare system was not fulfilling the promise to our seniors. You know, a senior would go in and get a heart operation for $100,000. The Government would pay for it, but they wouldn't pay for the prescription drugs that would prevent the heart operation from needing to be in the first place.

So I said to Congress, "Why don't we come together and make sure our seniors have got a modern health care system." We got the job done when it came to strengthening Medicare for our seniors. And working with Chuck Grassley, we've also taken care of our rural hospitals. You know what I'm talking about if you live in rural Iowa. You know how the system wasn't good for the Iowa hospitals and docs. We corrected the problem. We're getting the job done.

We will continue to expand community health centers for low-income Americans. We will expand health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. I understand most people get their health insurance through the businesses, and most new jobs are created by small businesses. Yet, small businesses are having trouble affording health care. We must allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses are able to do.

In order to make sure health care is available and affordable here in Iowa, we need to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business and running up the cost of your health care. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now.

In all we do to improve health care in America, we'll make sure that the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'm running because I know there's more to do to keep this economy strong. We've been through a lot together when it came to this economy. We've been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals. The terrorist attack hurt our economy.

And yet, we've got an economy that's growing. We've overcome the obstacles. We've overcome them because we've got

great workers. We've overcome them because we've got great farmers. We've overcome those obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and the small-business sector of this economy is alive and well. And I believe we've overcome those obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

Our view was, "If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief." We also helped our families by raising the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. I think the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage. We helped our small businesses. We helped them purchase equipment. This time, the check was actually in the mail, too. [*Laughter*]

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The national unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent, which is well below the national average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in your great State is at 4.4 percent. Our economic recovery plan is working.

A strong farm economy is good for our Nation's economy, and we have a strong farm economy today. We're seeing record exports for farm products. Farm income is up. And that means people are making a living here in rural Iowa. And that is good for the United States of America, and I intend to keep it that way.

There's more work to be done to make sure this economy grows. I submitted an energy plan to the United States Congress. It needs to get the energy plan to my desk. The energy plan says, "We'll work on conservation. We'll have clean coal technology. We'll explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways." But it's an energy plan that also recognizes the vast potential of corn and soybeans. I believe in ethanol, and I believe in biodiesel. See, I think, one of these days, with good research, a President is going to be sitting at the desk there in the Oval Office; somebody is going to walk in and say, "Guess what, Mr. President. The corn crop is up, and we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy."

I believe we ought to have wise trade policy in order to make sure this economy grows and people can find work here in America. We open up our markets for other—to other countries, and that's good for you. You see, when you have more product to choose from, you're going to get a—what you're demanding at a better price and better quality. That's the way the market works. So instead of shutting down our markets, we'll continue to open up other people's markets. If people treat us the way we treat them, we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere in the world.

That's why we've been—I've been out there working to have free trade agreements with countries all around the world. It's good for Iowa farmers that we're opening up markets. See, I think you can compete with any farmer, anyplace, anytime, and all you need is a chance, a level playing field. This administration is committed to making sure Iowa farm products are sold all over the world.

Every day is Earth Day when you own your own land. The best conservation policy starts with encouraging our farmers and ranchers to conserve. That's why I'm such a strong believer in the CRP program. It's a good program. It's good for wildlife. It's good for land. It's good for the families who make a living off the farm. Right now we have about 35 million acres of farm land in the program, and I know you know that contracts covering roughly two-thirds of the existing land in that program are scheduled to expire in 2007 and 2008. To make sure the farmlands stay protected, I've directed the Secretary of Agriculture to offer early reenrollments and extensions on existing projects, existing contracts.

There's more work to do to make sure this economy continues to grow. One thing we got to do, be smart about how we spend your money in Washington, DC. And the other thing is to keep your taxes low. The worst thing that could happen to our economy right now is to let them run up your taxes on you. I'm running against a fellow who's promised over $2 trillion of new spending, and we still got September and October to go. [*Laughter*]

So they said, "How you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we're just going to tax the rich." Now, you've heard that before, haven't you? Yes. When you hear them in Washington say "tax the rich," hang on to your wallet. [*Laughter*] But the good news is,

we're not going to let him tax anybody because we're going to win Iowa and win the country in '04.

We have more to do to wage and win the war on terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers and set up cells around the world, including the United States. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the October Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He funded—he subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein and his henchmen killed thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. I saw a threat.

After September the 11th, this country must deal with threats before they fully materialize. One of the lessons of that day is that when we see a threat, we can no longer hope for the best. We must deal with those threats. We must never forget that lesson, for the security of our people.

So I went to the United States Congress. The Congress looked at the same intelligence I had looked at. They remembered the same history of Saddam Hussein. They concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force. Members of both political parties came to that conclusion, including my opponent.

The last choice of the Commander in Chief is to commit troops into combat. We must try all means necessary to deal with threats before they fully materialize. So I went to the United Nations. I said, "Saddam Hussein is a threat." They looked at the same intelligence, and they came to the same conclusion we had come to that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and by a 15-to-nothing vote in the U.N. Security Council said Saddam Hussein must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequence. The world spoke, and the world spoke with one voice.

But as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He wasn't about to listen to what the world had said. As a matter of fact, when inspectors were sent into Iraq, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust a madman, or take action to defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we all thought were there, Saddam Hussein had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to his enemies. And that was a risk this country could not afford to have taken after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found another nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. See, after months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we didn't find the stockpiles we

thought were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. And I thank him for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] But I want to caution you, there's still a little over 60 days left for him to change his mind again.

We have more to do. I'm running because I know we have more to do to make this country secure. We'll continue to work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

We are winning this war against these terrorists, and we will win this war against these terrorists. In order to do so, America must continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat these people. There's nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. Over the next 4 years, I will continue to build coalitions so we can work together. It's in our interest. We have good, strong coalitions. It's in the interest of others that we work together. But I will never turn over America's national security decision to leaders of other countries.

We'll keep our commitment to help the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. We set a clear goal. Those countries will be peaceful. They'll be democratic, and they'll be allies in the war on terror. We'll keep our commitment because when America gives its word, America must keep its word. We'll keep our commitment because it's in our interest that free societies emerge in those countries. Our strategy is clear. We'll provide enough security so they can head for elections. And at the same time, we'll help Afghans and Iraqis assume the duties necessary for a free society to emerge. We're training their troops. We're training their police, so they can do the hard work of defeating the few who want to deny the hopes and ambitions of the many. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

Our troops are keeping our commitments around the world. We have got a fantastic United States military. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I have made a pledge to them and their loved ones that our Government will support them in their missions. And that's why, last September, I went to the United States Congress, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and proposed supplemental funding to support them in their mission. The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was a very important piece of legislation and funding. It was necessary. We had great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

So they said, "Why did you vote against this vital legislation?" He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." I spend a lot of time here in this State. I've never heard anybody talk like that in Iowa. [*Laughter*] They pressed him further, and he said, well, he's proud of the vote. And finally, he said it's just a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. See, a free and democratic Iraq and a free and democratic Afghanistan will serve as powerful examples in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries provide hope for their people. The best way to defeat terror in the long run is to spread liberty around the world.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I've spent time sitting at a table with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. My dad fought against the Japanese; your dads fought against the Japanese. But because we believed in—liberty could transform people, after World War II, my predecessor and many in this country worked with Japan to become a self-governing, democratic nation. And so when you hear me talk about the

transformational power of liberty, think about the fact that I'm talking to the head of a former enemy that's now an ally in peace. When we sit around the table, we're talking about how to make the world more peaceful. Someday, an elected official from the United States and a duly elected leader of Iraq will be talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're making America more secure. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American spirit. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We'll continue to work hard to protect you here at home. We've created the Department of Homeland Security to better organize our Government to deal with the threats of the 21st century. No, there's great communication now between the Federal, State, and local levels. I want to thank the first-responders here in the great State of Iowa for serving your communities. The FBI and the CIA are talking better. We're reorganizing the intelligence-gathering to make sure we get the very best information possible to protect the American people.

We must renew the PATRIOT Act so our law enforcement has the tools necessary to defend you against terrorist threat. We must do a better job of securing our borders and our ports.

We're working hard. We're working hard to make this country more secure, and we'll continue to press for needed reforms in Washington. But it's hard in that city for reform. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, a lot of people who like the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform; you have to be able to get the job done.

So when you're out there gathering up the vote, remind people in this great State that when it comes to reforming schools and improving education for every child in America, we're getting the job done; that when it comes to health care reforms to help rural hospitals in Iowa and to help families and seniors, we're getting the job done; and when it comes to improving our economy and keeping this ag economy strong in America, we're getting the job done; that when it comes to better securing this homeland, defeating the terrorists, and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. And remind them, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. At my convention speech Thursday—I guess I better get home and write it here pretty soon—[*laughter*]—I'm going to talk about the fact we're in a changing world, and the role of Government is to help people during a changing world, not to give them orders but to stand side by side so people can realize their dreams.

And one of the ways to do that is to promote an ownership society in America. In changing times, if you own something, it provides stability. For example, in changing times, if you own and control your own health care account, you can take it from job to job. In changing times, it's helpful for younger workers to be able to take some of their own money and have a personal savings account in Social Security that they can call their own. In changing times—by the way, for baby boomers and older, we're in good shape in Social Security. Nothing is going to change because it's solvent for us. It's the younger workers we need to worry about.

In changing times, we want more people owning their own business, owning their own farm, owning a piece of the future of America. In changing times, we want more people owning their own home. Do you realize the homeownership rate in America is at an all-time high? More and more people are owning their own home. I think there's nothing better in America than somebody who says, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." See, when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In changing times, there's some things that won't change, the individual values we try to live by, courage, integrity, and reverence, and compassion. Our beliefs in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity won't change. In changing times, we'll protect the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families and our schools and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. You know, the culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're a mom or a dad, if you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for supporting your teachers and doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. You know, there's quiet times in the life of this Nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, steadfast purpose, and a deep belief in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember thanking people for their hard work, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me in the eye with his bloodshot eyes, and he said, "Do not let me down."

I have a duty that has gone on since that day. I wake up every morning trying to best determine how to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through a lot together. We've done a lot of hard work. There's more to be done to make sure our schools reach their full potential. There's more to be done to spread opportunity to every single corner of this country. There's more to be done to pass the values of this land on to another generation. There's more to be done to spread freedom and peace so our children can grow up in a peaceful world.

You know, when I campaigned across your State, I said if you gave me the honor of holding this office, I would uphold the honor and dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for the next 4 years.

Thanks for coming, and may God bless. Thank you all very much. God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. at the Alleman Farm. In his remarks, he referred to Glen Keppy, chairman, Iowa Farm Team, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Mayor Bill Bodenstiner of Alleman, IA; Iowa State Senator Stewart Iverson; former Governors Terry Branstad and Robert D. Ray of Iowa; Stan Thompson, candidate for Congress in Iowa's 3d Congressional District; Jan Lyons, president, National Cattlemen's Beef Association; Leon "Len" Corzine, first vice president, 2004 Corn Board, National Corn Growers Association; Ron Heck, chairman, American Soybean Association; Keith Berry, president, board of directors, National Pork Producers Council; Craig Lang, president, board of directors, Iowa Farm Bureau; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. He also referred to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), administered by the Farm Service Agency, United States Department of Agriculture.

Remarks in Columbus, Ohio

September 1, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. What a warm welcome. It doesn't get any better than being introduced by Jack Nicklaus in Columbus, Ohio. While you were cheering, I asked him if he had any advice for my golf game. He said, "Quit." [*Laughter*] I'm so honored to be here with Jack and Barbara Nicklaus. He is a—what a class act. And I'm proud to have him endorse my candidacy for the Presidency of the United States.

Jack said he and Barbara are from Columbus—so am I. My grandfather was raised right here in Columbus, Ohio. So I'm here to ask that you send a home-boy back to Washington, DC.

I'm thrilled to be traveling today with Laura. She raised the bar last night. What a fantastic speech she gave. I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is to put her back in for 4 more years.

I appreciate you all coming. I'm here to ask for the vote. See, I believe you've got to come to the people and ask for their vote. I'm here to let you know I'm going to lay out a vision tomorrow night for a safer world and a more hopeful America, that we have done a lot—[*applause*].

I'm here to ask for your help as well. You can't win an election alone. I need you to help register your friends and neighbors. Get on the Internet at georgewbush.com and find out how you can volunteer for this campaign. For those of you who are volunteering, I want to thank you very much for the work you've done and the work you're going to do. There is no question in my mind, with your hard work, we will carry Ohio again and win this country.

I'm looking forward to hearing my superb runningmate's speech tonight. Dick Cheney is a solid citizen. He's got good judgment and sound advice. He's a man who can get the job done.

I'm thankful that Barbara Nicklaus and son Gary Nicklaus are traveling with Jack today. I want to thank both of them for joining us.

I appreciate my friend Senator Mike DeWine joining us today. He's a fine United States Senator. You know, we've been traveling your State by bus, and old Mike showed up every time. He's out there shaking those hands and waving to the crowds. I appreciate his friendship. I also want to urge you to put George Voinovich back into office as your United States Senator. I'm proud that my friend Congresswoman Deborah Pryce is with us. She is a fine Member of the House of Representatives.

I want to thank John McConnell for opening up this beautiful hall. He's a great citizen of this community who owns the Columbus Blue Jackets. He said, "Do you have any advice?" I said, "I cannot skate." [*Laughter*] But I appreciate the hospitality.

I want to thank Chris Spielman for being here as well. I'm honored he's here. I appreciate the Pickering Central High marching band for joining us today. I'll try to keep my speech short so you can get home and do your homework.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. I want to thank the folks who put this on, this fantastic rally on. I know it takes hard work to get this many people here. But thanks for all you're doing. I'm here to let you know that I've got a clear vision and strong determination to make this country a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place for every American.

In the past few years, we've been through a lot together, and we've accomplished a lot. But the only reason to look back in a campaign is to determine who best to lead us forward. Even though we've done a lot, I'm here to tell you there's more to do. There's more to do to make this country a hopeful country for every citizen.

We've got more to do to make sure the public schools in America are centers of excellence we know they can be. When I went to office—got into office a couple of years ago, too many of our schools were shuffling children through, grade after grade, year after year, without them learning the basics. We challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations in the public schools in America. We've raised the standards. We believe in local control of schools. And we believe in return for Federal money, people must show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract, because we expect every child to learn in America. Because we're measuring and correcting problems early, before it's too late, the achievement gap in America is closing.

But there's more work to be done. We've got to make sure the Internet is in our high school classrooms. We need to have early intervention programs for junior high and high school students, so they're not left behind. We got to make sure AP courses are expanded. We got to make sure we teach more math and science in the high schools

so that kids can compete in this global economy. We want to make sure the high school diploma means something. We'll increase Pell grants and loans so when a high school kid gets out of high school, he's got a chance to go to college. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will have the confidence and the skills necessary to be able to find a job in America.

We've got more to do to make such health care is available and affordable. When I came to office, too many older Americans could not afford prescription drugs, and Medicare didn't pay for them. You might remember those old Medicare debates. Matter of fact, they used to call it "Mediscare," and the system was getting old. See, we'd pay $100,000 for a heart operation in Medicare but wouldn't pay for the medicine to prevent the heart operation from happening in the first place. I went to Washington with the desire to improve Medicare for our seniors, and we got the job done.

We're expanding community health centers for low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. Most people get their insurance through their places of work. Most new jobs are created by small businesses. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To make sure American families get health care, small businesses must be allowed to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts that big companies are able to get.

There's more work to be done to make sure health care is accessible and affordable. We'll harness technology to reduce costs and prevent costly mistakes. We'll expand research to find new cures. In order to make sure your health care system here is a viable health care, we must get rid of the frivolous lawsuits that are running your docs out of business. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

In all we do to improve health care in this country, we will make sure that health decisions are made by patients and doctors and not by Government officials in Washington, DC.

I'm running because I know there's more to do to make sure this economy continues to grow. Our economy has been through a lot. We've been through a recession. We've been through the terrorist attacks. We had the corporate scandals. These were obstacles in the way for good economic growth, but we've overcome the obstacles because America's workers are the finest in the world. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great farmers and ranchers in America. We've overcome these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The small-business sector of our economy is thriving in this country. We've overcome these obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

We didn't pick winners or losers when it came time for tax cuts. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." That's the fair way to do it. We also increased the child credit to help moms and dads. We reduced the marriage penalty. I believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We helped our small businesses; this time the check actually was in the mail.

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, over the past 12 months we've added 1.5 million new jobs. Because we acted, the national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent, well below the national average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

I fully understand we still face challenges in manufacturing communities and places like Youngstown and some other parts of your great State—Canton. I've been to those communities. I know there are workers worried about their future. I've got a plan to continue the economic vitality of this State and this country. I will not rest so long as anybody in your State who wants to work cannot find a job. I'm running because I know there's more to do to create economic vitality.

And to keep jobs here in America, this country must have an energy strategy that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I submitted a plan to the United

States Congress that encourages conservation, encourages alternative sources of energy, encourages clean coal technology, encourages environmentally sensitive exploration for natural gas. It's a reasonable plan. It's stuck in the Congress. They need to get it to my desk so we can keep jobs here in this country.

In order to keep jobs here in America, we need tort reform and regulatory relief. In order to keep jobs here in America, we must make sure our trade policies are fair. We've opened up our markets, and it's good for you that we've done so. See, if you've got more to choose from, you're more likely to get a better product at a better price. But it's only fair if other countries treat us the way they treat them. The best trade policy is to open up their markets. The best trade policy is to enforce trade laws. The best trade policy is to say, "Treat us the way we treat you." We can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime, if the rules are fair.

In order to keep jobs in America, we must have a lifetime of learning opportunity for American workers. I'm a big believer in the community college system. I believe they make a lot of sense. It's a good use of taxpayers' money to encourage and help workers retrain for the jobs which will be created in the 21st century. If we help our workers find the skills necessary to fill the jobs, this economy will continue to grow and people will be able to realize their hopes and aspirations.

In order for this economy to continue to grow and for jobs to stay in America, we must be wise about how we spend your money, and we must keep your taxes low. Running up the taxes on the working people and the small-business owners and the farmers and ranchers of America would hurt this economic recovery. I'm running against a fellow who has already promised over $2 trillion of new Federal spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And we've still got 60 days to go in the campaign. [*Laughter*] No telling what's going to happen coming down the stretch. So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, I'll just tax the rich." Yes, we have heard that before in American politics. You know what it means, "tax the rich." It means the rich dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him do it. We're going to carry Ohio and this country in November.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells in dozens of countries, including our own. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and clear message, Libya has abandoned its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein and his henchmen murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. Saddam Hussein was a threat. And one of the important lessons of September the 11th, a lesson this country must never forget, is that we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize.

So I went to the United States Congress. I said, "I see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history of Saddam Hussein, and came to the

same conclusion—Saddam Hussein was a threat—and authorized the use of force. My opponent looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion.

The President must try all options to resolve a threat before he commits troops into combat, and so I went to the United Nations. I said, "I see a threat." They looked at the intelligence, the same intelligence. They remembered the same history, and with a 15-to-nothing vote in the United Nations Security Council, said to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." The world spoke.

But as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. When we sent inspectors, or when the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, he systematically deceived them. So I have a choice to make at this point in our history: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or take action to defend our country? Given that choice, I will defend America.

Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we expected to find, Saddam had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to the enemy. That is not a risk we could afford to take after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

And now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we didn't find the stockpiles we thought we would find, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I appreciate him clearing all this up. But I caution you, there's still 62 days left for him to change his mind.

I'm running because I understand we have more to do to make this country secure. We will continue to work with friends and allies around the world to pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best with them. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat terror. There's nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue to build on the alliances and work with our friends for the cause of security and peace. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We'll keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We've set clear goals, peaceful and democratic countries that are allies in the war on terror. It's our interest that those countries become peaceful and democratic countries. It's in our interest that they become allies in the war on terror.

They're run by strong leaders now. Our military will help them on their way to the political process that the people demand. We'll help train Iraqis and Afghan citizens so they can do the hard work of defending their democracy. Our troops will complete this mission as quickly as possible so they do not have to stay a day longer than necessary.

In these crucial times, our commitments are kept by the fine men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and around the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with them. I've seen their unselfish courage and their great decency. I appreciate the veterans who are here today for having set such a great example for those who wear our uniform.

I made a commitment to our troops and to the loved ones of our troops that they will have the resources they need to fight and win this war against the terrorists. Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their mission. This legislation provided funding for body armor, vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was an important funding request, and it received significant bipartisan support.

As a matter of fact, so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him to explain his vote. And here's actually what he said: "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] Yes. Now he's offering different explanations. They said—he said he's proud of his vote. And they kept pressing him, and he said, "Well, the whole thing was a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will serve as powerful examples of liberty in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries listen to the dreams of their people.

By serving the cause of liberty, we're helping others, and we're making our country more secure. By serving the cause of liberty, we're helping to spread the peace that we all want. By serving the cause of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of our country. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We have more to do to protect our country. Enemies who hate us are still plotting to harm us. We have a difference of opinion on these terrorists. My opponent said that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I think the logic is upside-down. If you ever hear that, tell your friends and neighbors that during the 1990s, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before we went to war with them. These people don't need an excuse for their hatred. I think it's wrong to blame America for the anger and the evil of the killers. We don't create terrorists by fighting back. We will defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

There are a lot of really fine people at the Federal level, the State level, and first-responders at the local level who are working hard to protect us. I want to thank the first-responders who are here today. I want to thank you for your dedication.

The cooperation has never been better between the Federal, State, and the local government. We're working hard to make sure we get the best intelligence-gathering capability. It's important that we know the movements of the enemy. And so we're pushing for reforms for intelligence-gathering. It's essential that we renew the PATRIOT Act so law enforcement has the tools necessary to find and disrupt terrorist activity in the United States. We've been pushing hard for reforms to make sure we better guard our borders and safeguard our ports. We created the Department of Homeland Security.

These reforms are hard in Washington. See, there's a lot of entrenched interests there, a lot of people who like the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform; you have to be able to get the job done. So when you're out campaigning, remind people that when it comes to reforming schools, raising the bar, and closing that achievement gap, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms and helping our seniors with modern health, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and growing jobs so people can find work, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing the homeland and defeating the terrorists and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. And when you're out there working hard to garner the vote and gather the vote, tell them, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody in there who can get the job done.

Tomorrow night I'm going to talk about how this world of ours is changing, and Government must change with the changing world to make people's lives easier, to give people a chance to be able to realize the full promise of tomorrow. Changing times are difficult times. And one way to help add security to people's lives during changing times is to promote an ownership society. See, if you own your own health care account and you change jobs, you'll have the security of being able to take it with you from job to job.

We've got a lot of younger folks here today. And I appreciate you coming. Baby boomers like me are in good shape when it comes to Social Security. The system is sound for people like me and older. But if you're a younger worker, you better listen carefully to the debate about the retirement systems here in America. I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own tax money and create a personal savings account as a part of Social Security.

We'll continue to create an environment so that people are willing to take risk and create their own small business. We want more small-business owners in America. One of the most hopeful statistics is the fact that today the homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. During changing times, owning your own home brings stability in your life. See, we're going to continue to promote an ownership society in America because it brings stability during changing times, but also because I understand when a person owns something, they have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a time of change, there's some things that won't change: the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; our belief in liberty and opportunity, and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. In changing times, we must value the institutions that give us direction and purposes, our families, our schools, our religious congregations.

We believe and stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility. You know, the culture is changing from one that says, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. You know, there are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and an unyielding belief in the values that make this country a wonderful land.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I was thanking people for their work, and a fellow looked me right in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down."

Since that day, I have a duty that has gone on. I wake up every morning trying to figure out how best to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have come through much together. We have done a lot of hard work. We're moving this country forward, but there's more work to be done. During the next 4 years, we will spread ownership and hope and opportunity to every corner of this country—I mean every corner. We will pass the enduring values of this country on to a younger generation. We will continue to spread freedom and peace.

You know, when I campaigned across your State 4 years ago, I said if you gave me the great honor of serving as President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. And with your hard work and with your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. at the Nationwide Arena. In his remarks, he referred to professional golfer Jack Nicklaus and his wife, Barbara, and their son, professional golfer Gary

Nicklaus; and former professional football player Chris Spielman.

Remarks Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in New York City

September 2, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Mr. Chairman, delegates, fellow citizens: I am honored by your support, and I accept your nomination for President of the United States.

When I said those words 4 years ago, none of us could have envisioned what these years would bring. In the heart of this great city, we saw tragedy arrive on a quiet morning. We saw the bravery of rescuers grow with danger. We learned of passengers on a doomed plane who died with a courage that frightened their killers. We have seen a shaken economy rise to its feet. And we have seen Americans in uniform storming mountain strongholds and charging through sandstorms and liberating millions with acts of valor that would make the men of Normandy proud.

Since 2001, Americans have been given hills to climb and found the strength to climb them. Now, because we have made the hard journey, we can see the valley below. Now, because we have faced challenges with resolve, we have historic goals within our reach and greatness in our future. We will build a safer world and a more hopeful America, and nothing will hold us back.

In the work we have done and the work we will do, I am fortunate to have a superb Vice President. I have counted on Dick Cheney's calm and steady judgment in difficult days, and I am honored to have him at my side.

I am grateful to share my walk in life with Laura Bush. Americans have come to see the goodness and kindness and strength I first saw 26 years ago, and we love our First Lady.

I'm a fortunate father of two spirited, intelligent, and lovely young women. I'm blessed with a sister and brothers who are my closest friends. And I will always be the proud and grateful son of George and Barbara Bush.

My father served 8 years at the side of another great American, Ronald Reagan. His spirit of optimism and good will and decency are in this hall and are in our hearts and will always define our party.

Two months from today, voters will make a choice based on the records we have built, the convictions we hold, and the vision that guides us forward. A Presidential election is a contest for the future. Tonight I will tell you where I stand, what I believe, and where I will lead this country in the next 4 years.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach, so we passed the most important Federal education reform in history. Because we acted, children are making sustained progress in reading and math; America's schools are getting better; and nothing will hold us back.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor America's seniors, so I brought Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen Medicare. Now seniors are getting immediate help buying medicine; soon every senior will be able to get prescription drug coverage; and nothing will hold us back.

I believe in the energy and innovative spirit of America's workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, and ranchers, so we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation. Because we acted, our economy is growing again and creating jobs, and nothing will hold us back.

I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

I'm running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running with a compassionate conservative philosophy, that government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we will win this election.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. The story of America is the story of expanding liberty, an ever-widening circle, constantly growing to reach further and include more. Our Nation's founding commitment is still our deepest commitment: In our world and here at home, we will extend the frontiers of freedom.

The times in which we work and live are changing dramatically. The workers of our parents' generation typically had one job, one skill, one career, often with one company that provided health care and a pension. And most of those workers were men. Today, workers change jobs, even careers, many times during their lives. And in one of the most dramatic shifts our society has seen, two-thirds of all moms also work outside the home.

This changed world can be a time of great opportunity for all Americans to earn a better living, support your family, and have a rewarding career. And Government must take your side. Many of our most fundamental systems, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. We will transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared—and thus truly free—to make your own choices and pursue your own dreams.

My plan begins with providing the security and opportunity of a growing economy. We now compete in a global market that provides new buyers for our goods but new competition for our workers. To create more jobs in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. To create jobs, my plan will encourage investment and expansion by restraining Federal spending, reducing regulation, and making the tax relief permanent. To create jobs, we will make our country less dependent on foreign sources of energy. To create jobs, we will expand trade and level the playing field to sell American goods and services across the globe. And we must protect small-business owners and workers from the explosion of frivolous lawsuits that threaten jobs across our country.

Another drag on our economy is the current Tax Code, which is a complicated mess, filled with special interest loopholes, saddling our people with more than 6 billion hours of paperwork and headache every year. The American people deserve—and our economic future demands—a simpler, fairer, progrowth system. In a new term, I will lead a bipartisan effort to reform and simplify the Federal Tax Code.

Another priority in a new term will be to help workers take advantage of the expanding economy to find better and higher paying jobs. In this time of change, many workers want to go back to school to learn different or higher level skills. So we will double the number of people served by our principal job training program and increase funding for our community colleges. I know that with the right skills, American workers can compete with anyone, anywhere in the world.

In this time of change, opportunity in some communities is more distant than in others. To stand with workers in poor communities and those that have lost manufacturing, textile, and other jobs, we will create American opportunity zones. In these areas, we will provide tax relief and other incentives to attract new business and improve housing and job training to bring hope and work throughout all of America.

As I've traveled the country, I've met many workers and small-business owners who have told me that they are worried they cannot afford health care. More than half of the uninsured are small-business employees and their families. In a new term, we must allow small firms to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts available to big companies.

We will offer a tax credit to encourage small businesses and their employees to set up health savings accounts and provide direct help for low-income Americans to purchase them. These accounts give workers the security of insurance against major illness, the opportunity to save tax-free for routine health expenses, and the freedom of knowing you can take your account with you whenever you change jobs. We will provide low-income Americans with better access to health care. In a new term, I will ensure every poor county in America has a community or rural health center.

As I have traveled our country, I have met too many good doctors, especially ob-gyns, who are being forced out of practice because of the high cost of lawsuits. To make health

care more affordable and accessible, we must pass medical liability reform now. And in all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure that health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

In this time of change, Government must take the side of working families. In a new term, we will change outdated labor laws to offer comp-time and flex-time. Our laws should never stand in the way of a more family-friendly workplace.

Another priority for a new term is to build an ownership society, because ownership brings security and dignity and independence.

Thanks to our policies, homeownership in America is at an alltime high. Tonight we set a new goal: 7 million more affordable homes in the next 10 years so more American families will be able to open the door and say, "Welcome to my home."

In an ownership society, more people will own their health care plans and have the confidence of owning a piece of their retirement. We'll always keep the promise of Social Security for our older workers. With the huge baby boom generation approaching retirement, many of our children and grandchildren understandably worry whether Social Security will be there when they need it. We must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their taxes in a personal account, a nest egg you can call your own and Government can never take away.

In all these proposals, we seek to provide not just a Government program but a path, a path to greater opportunity, more freedom, and more control over your own life.

And the path begins with our youngest Americans. To build a more hopeful America, we must help our children reach as far as their vision and character can take them. Tonight I remind every parent and every teacher, I say to every child: No matter what your circumstance, no matter where you live, your school will be the path to promise of America.

We are transforming our schools by raising standards and focusing on results. We are insisting on accountability, empowering parents and teachers, and making sure that local people are in charge of their schools. By testing every child, we are identifying those who need help, and we are providing a record level of funding to get them that help. In northeast Georgia, Gainesville Elementary School is mostly Hispanic and 90 percent poor, and this year 90 percent of the students passed State tests in reading and math. The principal expresses the philosophy of his school this way: "We don't focus on what we can't do at this school. We focus on what we can do, and we do whatever it takes to get kids across the finish line." See, this principal is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. And that is the spirit of our education reform and the commitment of our country: *No dejaremos a ningun nino atras.* We will leave no child behind.

Audience members. *Viva Bush! Viva Bush! Viva Bush!*

We are making progress—we are making progress, and there is more to do. In this time of change, most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, yet only about one in four students gets there. In our high schools, we will fund early intervention programs to help students at risk. We will place a new focus on math and science. As we make progress, we will require a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

America's children must also have a healthy start in life. In a new term, we will lead an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children who are eligible but not signed up for the Government's health insurance programs. We will not allow a lack of attention or information to stand between these children and the health care they need.

Anyone who wants more details on my agenda can find them online. The web address is not very imaginative, but it's easy to remember: georgewbush.com.

These changing times can be exciting times of expanded opportunity. And here, you face a choice. My opponent's policies are dramatically different from ours. Senator Kerry opposed Medicare reform and health savings accounts. After supporting my education reforms, he now wants to dilute them.

He opposes legal and medical liability reform. He opposed reducing the marriage penalty, opposed doubling the child credit, opposed lowering income taxes for all who pay them.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Wait a minute—wait a minute. To be fair, there are some things my opponent is for. [*Laughter*] He's proposed more than $2 trillion in Federal spending so far, and that's a lot, even for a Senator from Massachusetts. And to pay for that spending, he's running on a platform of increasing taxes, and that's the kind of promise a politician usually keeps. [*Laughter*]

His tax—his policies of tax and spend, of expanding Government rather than expanding opportunity, are the politics of the past. We are on the path to the future, and we're not turning back.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In this world of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, the institutions that give our lives meaning and purpose. Our society rests on a foundation of responsibility and character and family commitment.

Because family and work are sources of stability and dignity, I support welfare reform that strengthens family and requires work. Because a caring society will value its weakest members, we must make a place for the unborn child. Because religious charities provide a safety net of mercy and compassion, our Government must never discriminate against them. Because the union of a man and woman deserves an honored place in our society, I support the protection of marriage against activist judges, and I will continue to appoint Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent recently announced that he is the conservative—the candidate of "conservative values"—must have come as a surprise to a lot of his supporters. [*Laughter*] There's some problems with this claim. If you say the heart and soul of America is found in Hollywood, I'm afraid you are not the candidate of conservative values. If you voted against the bipartisan Defense of Marriage Act, which President Clinton signed, you are not the candidate of conservative values. If you gave a speech, as my opponent did, calling the Reagan Presidency 8 years of "moral darkness," then you may be a lot of things, but the candidate of conservative values is not one of them.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism, and you know where I stand. Three days after September the 11th, I stood where Americans died, in the ruins of the Twin Towers. Workers in hardhats were shouting to me, "Whatever it takes." A fellow grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. So we have fought the terrorists across the Earth—not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We have tripled funding for homeland security and trained a half a million first-responders, because we are determined to protect our homeland. We are transforming our military and reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We are staying on the offensive, striking terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. And we are working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East, because freedom will bring a future of hope and the peace we all want. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks. Today, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-

quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been detained or killed. We have led; many have joined; and America and the world are safer.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. And the toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing, even using weapons of mass destruction. And we know that September the 11th requires our country to think differently. We must and we will confront threats to America before it is too late.

In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. Members of both political parties, including——

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Members of both political parties, including my opponent and his runningmate, saw the threat and voted to authorize the use of force. We went to the United Nations Security Council, which passed a unanimous resolution demanding the dictator disarm or face serious consequences. Leaders in the Middle East urged him to comply. After more than a decade of diplomacy, we gave Saddam Hussein another chance, a final chance, to meet his responsibilities to the civilized world. He again refused, and I faced the kind of decision that comes only to the Oval Office, a decision no President would ask for but must be prepared to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend our country? Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Because we acted to defend our country, the murderous regimes of Saddam Hussein and the Taliban are history, more than 50 million people have been liberated, and democracy is coming to the broader Middle East. In Afghanistan, terrorists have done everything they can to intimidate people, yet more than 10 million citizens have registered to vote in the October Presidential election, a resounding endorsement for democracy. Despite ongoing acts of violence, Iraq now has a strong Prime Minister, a national council, and national elections are scheduled for January. Our Nation is standing with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, because when America gives its word, America must keep its word.

As importantly, we are serving a vital and historic cause that will make our country safer. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them, and that helps us keep the peace. So our mission in Afghanistan and Iraq is clear: We will help new leaders to train their armies and move toward elections and get on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible. And then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

Our troops know the historic importance of our work. One Army specialist wrote home: "We are transforming a once sick society into a hopeful place." "The various terrorist enemies we are facing in Iraq," he continued, "are really aiming at you back in the United States. This is a test of will for our country. We soldiers of yours are doing great and scoring victories and confronting the evil terrorists."

That young man is right. Our men and women in uniform are doing a superb job for America. Tonight I want to speak to all of them and to their families: You are involved in a struggle of historic proportion. Because of your service and sacrifice, we are defeating the terrorists where they live and plan, and you're making America safer. Because of you, women in Afghanistan are no longer shot in a sports stadium. Because of you, the people of Iraq no longer fear being executed and left in mass graves. Because of you, the world is more just and will be more peaceful. We owe you our thanks, and we owe you something more. We will give you all the resources, all the tools, and all the support you need for victory.

Again, my opponent and I have different approaches. I proposed and the Congress overwhelmingly passed $87 billion in funding needed by our troops doing battle in Afghanistan and Iraq. My opponent and his runningmate voted against this money for bullets and fuel and vehicles and body armor.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When asked to explain his vote, the Senator said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it."

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Then he said he was proud of that vote. Then, when pressed, he said it was a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

Our allies also know the historic importance of our work. About 40 nations stand beside us in Afghanistan and some 30 in Iraq. I deeply appreciate the courage and wise counsel of leaders like Prime Minister Howard, President Kwasniewski, Prime Minister Berlusconi, and, of course, Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Again, my opponent takes a different approach. In the midst of war, he has called American allies, quote, "a coalition of the coerced and the bribed." That would be nations like Great Britain, Poland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Denmark, El Salvador, Australia, and others, allies that deserve the respect of all Americans, not the scorn of a politician. I respect every soldier from every country who serves beside us in the hard work of history. America is grateful, and America will not forget.

The people we have freed won't forget either. Not long ago, seven Iraqi men came to see me in the Oval Office. They had X's branded into their foreheads, and their right hands had been cut off by Saddam Hussein's secret police, the sadistic punishment for imaginary crimes. During our emotional visit, one of the Iraqi men used his new prosthetic hand to slowly write out, in Arabic, a prayer for God to bless America. I am proud that our country remains the hope of the oppressed and the greatest force for good on this Earth.

Others understand the historic importance of our work. The terrorists know. They know that a vibrant, successful democracy at the heart of the Middle East will discredit their radical ideology of hate. They know that men and women with hope and purpose and dignity do not strap bombs on their bodies and kill the innocent. The terrorists are fighting freedom with all their cunning and cruelty because freedom is their greatest fear. And they should be afraid, because freedom is on the march.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom. As the citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq seize the moment, their example will send a message of hope throughout a vital region. Palestinians will hear the message that democracy and reform are within their reach, and so is peace with our good friend Israel. Young women across the Middle East will hear the message that their day of equality and justice is coming. Young men will hear the message that national progress and dignity are found in liberty, not tyranny and terror. Reformers and political prisoners and exiles will hear the message that their dream of freedom cannot be denied forever. And as freedom advances, heart by heart and nation by nation, America will be more secure and the world more peaceful.

America has done this kind of work before, and there have always been doubters. In 1946, 18 months after the fall of Berlin to Allied forces, a journalist in the New York Times wrote this: "Germany is a land in an acute stage of economic, political, and moral crisis. European capitals are frightened. In every military headquarters, one meets alarmed officials doing their utmost to deal with the consequences of the occupation policy that they admit has failed." End quote. Maybe that same person is still around, writing editorials. Fortunately, we had a resolute President named Truman who, with the American people, persevered, knowing that a new democracy at the center of Europe would lead to stability and peace. And because that generation of Americans held firm in the cause of liberty, we live in a better and safer world today.

The progress we and our friends and allies seek in the broader Middle East will not come easily or all at once. Yet Americans, of all people, should never be surprised by the power of liberty to transform lives and nations. That power brought settlers on perilous journeys, inspired colonies to rebellion, ended the sin of slavery, and set our Nation against the tyrannies of the 20th century. We were honored to aid the rise of democracy

in Germany and Japan and Nicaragua and Central Europe and the Baltics, and that noble story goes on. I believe that America is called to lead the cause of freedom in a new century. I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their liberty. I believe that given the chance, they will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; it is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

This moment in the life of our country will be remembered. Generations will know if we kept our faith and kept our word. Generations will know if we seized this moment and used it to build a future of safety and peace. The freedom of many and the future security of our Nation now depend on us. And tonight, my fellow Americans, I ask you to stand with me.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In the last 4 years, you and I have come to know each other. Even when we don't agree, at least you know what I believe and where I stand. You may have noticed I have a few flaws too. People sometimes have to correct my English. [*Laughter*] I knew I had a problem when Arnold Schwarzenegger started doing it. [*Laughter*] Some folks look at me and see a certain swagger, which in Texas is called walking. [*Laughter*] Now and then I come across as a little too blunt, and for that we can all thank the white-haired lady sitting right up there. [*Laughter*]

One thing I have learned about the Presidency is that whatever shortcomings you have, people are going to notice them—[*laughter*]—and whatever strengths you have, you're going to need them. These 4 years have brought moments I could not foresee and will not forget. I've tried to comfort Americans who lost the most on September the 11th, people who showed me a picture or told me a story so I would know how much was taken from them. I've learned firsthand that ordering Americans into battle is the hardest decision, even when it is right. I have returned the salute of wounded soldiers, some with a very tough road ahead, who say they were just doing their job. I've held the children of the fallen, who are told their dad or mom is a hero but would rather just have their mom or dad. I've met with the parents and wives and husbands who have received a folded flag and said a final goodbye to a soldier they loved.

I am awed that so many have used those meetings to say that I'm in their prayers and to offer encouragement to me. Where does that—strength like that come from? How can people so burdened with sorrow also feel such pride? It is because they know their loved one was last seen doing good, because they know that liberty was precious to the one they lost. And in those military families, I have seen the character of a great nation, decent, idealistic, and strong.

The world saw that spirit 3 miles from here when the people of this city faced peril together and lifted a flag over the ruins and defied the enemy with their courage. My fellow Americans, for as long as our country stands, people will look to the resurrection of New York City and they will say, "Here buildings fell. Here a nation rose."

We see America's character in our military, which finds a way or makes one. We see it in our veterans, who are supporting military families in their days of worry. We see it in our young people, who have found heroes once again. We see that character in workers and entrepreneurs, who are renewing our economy with their effort and optimism. And all of this has confirmed one belief beyond doubt: Having come this far, our tested and confident Nation can achieve anything.

To everything we know there is a season, a time for sadness, a time for struggle, a time for rebuilding. And now we have reached a time for hope. This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting liberty abroad, we will build a safer world. By encouraging liberty at home, we will build a more hopeful America. Like generations before us, we have a calling from beyond the stars to stand for freedom. This is the everlasting dream of America, and tonight, in this place, that dream is renewed. Now we go forward, grateful for our freedom, faithful to our cause, and confident in the future of the greatest nation on Earth.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 p.m. at Madison Square Garden. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Prime Minister John Howard of Australia; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks in Moosic, Pennsylvania

September 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thank you for coming. I appreciate so many people getting up so early. Laura and I are here to ask for the vote. We're here to let you know that I understand there's more to do to make this country a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place for every American. So we're here; we're pleased to be in Lackawanna County in this beautiful setting. Thanks for having us.

Before I begin, I do—I do know you'll join me in offering our prayers and best wishes to those in the path of the Hurricane Frances. There's been some devastation in the State of Florida. There's likely to be more devastation. And so I've ordered Federal teams to be in position to help the good people of that State, but the best thing we can do here is to offer our prayers.

Audience member. I can't hear you! [*Laughter*]

The President. Maybe it's because I gave—maybe it's because I talked too much last night, you know. [*Laughter*] I enjoyed giving that speech last night, and I am so proud that your State made my nomination official. And with your help, your State of Pennsylvania will be a significant reason we are reelected for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Laura set the bar pretty high when she gave her speech at the convention. She is—what a great First Lady, a wonderful mom, a terrific wife. Listen, I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He doesn't have the longest and prettiest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for his hair. I picked him for his judgment, experience, and because he can get the job done.

I appreciate the fact that Senator Arlen Specter is with us today. Put him back in for 6 more years in the Senate. Look who is next to him, Rick Santorum, United States Senator. Congressman Don Sherwood is here as well. I appreciate you being here, Congressman—good man.

Mayor Lou Barletta is with us from Hazelton, Pennsylvania. Hey, Lou, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] I appreciate David Wenzel, the former mayor of Scranton, who is with us here today. David, thank you for coming. My friend Bill Scranton is with us here. I appreciate him coming. I want to thank all the candidates who are here.

I want to thank my friend Mark Chesnutt. He's great, isn't he? Bubba Shot the Jukebox. He's from Beaumont, Texas, and I appreciate him lending his talent to come. I hope you enjoy him as much as I—I love his music.

Most of all, I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here, the people who put up the signs and make the phone calls and encourage people to register to vote. See, I think we have a duty in this country to vote. In a free land, we have a duty to vote. And I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors to vote. Register Republicans, register independents, register discerning Democrats—like Zell Miller of Georgia, he's a discerning Democrat—and then kind of head them to the poll. And when you get them there, remind them that George Bush and Dick Cheney are ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Now, we're coming down the stretch in this race. We got less than 2 months to go. And this is a historic national election. It's a time for choosing. It's going to come down to the records we've built, the convictions we hold, and the vision that guides us forward. Over the next 2 months, I'm looking forward to traveling our country, telling people where I intend to lead our country, and telling people what I believe.

I believe every child can learn in America, and then I believe every school must teach. That's why we passed important education reform that challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations, that says we must measure to determine whether a child can read, and if not, correct problems early before they're too late; that says that local folks ought to be in charge of the schools. It's a plan—we're making good progress across this country, and we're not turning back.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to our seniors. That's why I've worked with Republicans and Democrats to strengthen Medicare. Our seniors now get help buying medicine, and soon every senior will be able to have coverage for prescription drugs. It doesn't make any sense to pay $100,000 for heart surgery and not pay for the medicine to prevent the heart surgery from happening in the first place. We're making progress in honoring our commitment to our seniors, and we're not turning back.

I believe the role of Government is not to try to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneur, the small business, the farmer, and the rancher can survive. I believe in the spirit and innovative power of the American worker, and that is why we unleashed the energy of our economy with the largest tax relief in decades.

Because we acted, our economy is growing again. Because we acted, we've overcome recession, scandal, stock market decline, and a terrorist attack. This morning, we received jobs report for August, and it shows that our economy is strong and getting stronger. We added 144,000 new jobs, plus revisions of about 60,000 for the previous month, which means we've increased jobs over the last 2 months by over 200,000 jobs. Overall, we've added about 1.7 million new jobs since August of '03. The unemployment rate is now down to 5.4 percent. That's nearly a full point below the rate last summer and below the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in Pennsylvania is 5.3 percent. Our growing economy is spreading prosperity and opportunity, and nothing will hold us back.

I will continue to travel our country telling people what I believe, and I believe the most solemn duty of the President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running with a compassionate conservative philosophy that says Government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. As I travel this country, I know that this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we're going to win 4 more years.

Last night I spent time talking about how the world in which we live is changing. Women now work outside the home as well as work inside the home. Many people change jobs. It's a changing world, and the role of Government is to take the side of our workers and families in a time of change. Most of the fundamental systems of today, the Tax Code and health coverage and pension plans and worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. I'm running for 4 more years to change those fundamental systems so more Americans can realize the great promise of our country.

My plan begins—any good plan begins with making sure our economy continues to grow. The global market is expanding and creating new markets and new competition. My view is, to create more jobs here in America, this has got to be the best place in the world to do business. That's why we will expand trade in a fair way. Look, we open up our markets, and it's good for you that we do. See, if you have more choices, you're likely to get a product you want at a better price and higher quality. What I'm saying when it comes to trade to other countries is you treat us the way we treat you. We can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime, so long as the playing field is level.

But we've got to get rid of these junk lawsuits that threaten our small-business owners. We've got to trim back needless regulations that make it hard for people to employ people. In order to make sure that the economy expands, we've got to be wise about how we

spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low.

We have a difference in this campaign on low taxes. I'm running against a fellow who has promised over $2 trillion of new spending so far.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. And we're just coming down the stretch. By the way, 2 trillion is a lot of money to promise, even for a Senator from Massachusetts. And now they said—so they asked him, "How are you going to pay for it?" And he said, "Well, I'll pay for it all by taxing the rich." Two things wrong with that: One is you can't raise enough money by so-called taxing the rich to pay for his promises, which means somebody else is going to get stuck with the bill. But the other thing is, you've heard that rhetoric before, haven't you?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Yes, tax the rich. You know what that means. They dodge; you pay. But we're not going to let him, because we're going to win in November.

A drag in our economy is the Federal Tax Code, which is a complicated mess. You know, it is filled with special interest loopholes. Our people spend 6 billion hours of paperwork and headache every year. The American people deserve and our economic future depends on a simpler, fairer, progrowth Tax Code. In a second term, I will lead a bipartisan effort to reform and simplify the Federal taxes.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. We need to help our workers train for the new jobs of the 21st century. In a changing world, the jobs change, and oftentimes, there's a skills gap. And so we're going to make sure our community college system works better for our workers. We're going to provide more money to help workers gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

Most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, and yet only about one in four of our students gets there. And so in our high schools, we'll fund early intervention programs to help students at risk. We will place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we will require exit exams from high school because we want the high school diploma to mean something. By raising performance in the high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

There's more to do to make sure quality health care is available and affordable. More than one half of the uninsured in America are small-business employees and their families. In order to make sure small businesses can afford health care, we must allow small firms to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts available to big companies.

We will help small businesses and low-income Americans set up and purchase health savings accounts. In a new term, I will ensure that every poor county in America has got community health centers to make sure that people get preventative and primary care, not in the emergency rooms of America but in these clinics for low-income Americans. In all we do, we'll make sure that the health decisions are made by doctors and patient, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I want to talk about a national issue that is of concern to millions here in Pennsylvania. Too many good doctors, too many really fine healers are being forced out of practice because of the high cost of junk lawsuits. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and patients. We want medical liability reform—now.

Let me give you a quick story about what I'm talking about. I'm telling you, this is a national problem that requires a national solution. And there is a clear difference in this campaign on this issue. Today I met with Dr. Neal Davis from Carbondale. [*Applause*] He told all his patients to come—[*laughter*]—and Mary Coar, one of his patients. I want you to hear this story because it's happening all across America.

Last November, after 15 years of practice in Pennsylvania, Dr. Davis learned that his insurance company would no longer insure physicians in this State because of the junk lawsuits, because the law system here in terms of medicine is like a lottery, is what it's like. It's unfair to patients, and it's unfair

to doctors. It's unfair to taxpayers. He found a new policy, but it said he had to give up delivering babies as part of the coverage. That's what's happening to ob-gyns all across the country.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That forced Mary, 4 months pregnant, to start driving 50 miles each way to see different doctors—a different doctor. When Mary's daughter arrived this summer, she was delivered by a doctor Mary had never met. She said, "I started to cry when he told me he was going to have to stop delivering." This is happening because the legal system is gone awry. We need medical liability reform now.

Another priority for my administration in a new term will be an ownership society. See, I believe when you own something, your life is more secure; you have more dignity; and you have independence. And so we'll help more people own their own homes, own their own health plan, and gain the confidence of owning a piece of their retirement. There's nothing better in America than somebody opening their door saying, "Welcome to my home." Today, the homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. We will expand more homeownership over the next 4 years.

Listen, we will keep the promise of Social Security for baby boomers and older—I happen to be a baby boomer. But younger workers need to worry about the fiscal solvency of Social Security. We will strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their taxes in a personal account, an account they can call their own, and an account that Government can never take away.

In a world of change, there are some things that won't change, the values we try to live by, the institutions that give our lives meaning and purpose. Because family and work are sources of stability and dignity, I support welfare reform that strengthen family and require work.

I support a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. Because religious charities provide a safety net of mercy and compassion, our Government must never discriminate against those programs. I support marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. And I will continue to appoint Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

When he was campaigning out—I think it was in the Midwest, my opponent announced he was the candidate of "conservative values."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Which must have confused a lot of his supporters. [*Laughter*] See, if you say you're—if you say that the heart and soul of America is found in Hollywood, I'm not—I'm afraid you're not the candidate of conservative values. If you voted against a bipartisan Defense of Marriage Act, which my predecessor signed, you are not the candidate of conservative values. If you consistently vote against the rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment as my opponent has, you are not the candidate of conservative values. There is a clear difference of philosophy in this race. He is for expanding Government. I am for expanding opportunity.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, we have fought the terrorists across the globe, not for pride, not for power—because the security of our country depends on it. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. I want to thank you for helping raise Tom Ridge. He's doing a fine job in the Department of Homeland Security. We're transforming our military. We're reforming our intelligence services. We will stay on the offensive. We will strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. And we will continue to work to advance liberty—liberty in the broader Middle East—because freedom will bring a future of hope and the peace we all want. If America stays strong and resolute and determined, we will prevail.

And our strategy is succeeding. We're making progress. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for the terrorist groups. Saudi was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a gathering threat, and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks. Now, after we acted, now after the United States led—and many have joined—the Government of a free Afghanistan is

fighting terror. Pakistan is capturing terrorists. Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests. Libya is dismantling its weapons programs. The army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom, and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's members and associates have been detained or killed.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

[*At this point, an audience member fainted.*]

The President. Get another doc. Get a doctor.

This progress involves careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. The toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing, even using weapons of mass destruction. And we know that September the 11th requires our country to think differently. We must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. Members of both political parties looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history, and came to the same conclusion. Saddam Hussein was a threat. My opponent, in 2002, looked at the very same intelligence I looked at, and he came the same conclusion. See, he was one of the Members of Congress that voted to authorize the use of force because Saddam Hussein was a threat.

The last option for the Commander in Chief is to commit troops, and so I went to the United Nations. See, I believe we ought to try diplomacy before we commit troops. The United Nations passed a unanimous resolution demanding that Saddam Hussein disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. The free world spoke loud and clear. Yet Saddam Hussein, as he had for over a decade of diplomacy, ignored the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when we sent inspectors—or when the U.N. sent inspectors in, he systematically deceived the inspectors.

We gave Saddam Hussein a final chance to meet his responsibility to the civilized world. And when he refused, I faced the kind of decision that comes only to the Oval Office, a decision no President would ask for but must be prepared to make. Do I trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell. Because we acted to defend our country, the murderous regimes of Saddam and the Taliban are history. More than 50 million people now live in freedom.

Democracy is on the march in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. You realize that over 10 million citizens have registered to vote in the upcoming Afghan Presidential elections. It's amazing, isn't it? Think about what life was like 3 years ago for the people of that country. They were run by a group of barbarians, and today, they're showing up in the thousands to exercise their right as free men and women.

In Iraq, there's a strong leader; there's a national council; and elections in that country are scheduled in January. See, our Nation is standing with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq because when America gives its word, America must keep its word.

But as importantly, we're serving a vital and historic cause that will make our country safer. See, free societies do not export terror. Free societies do not feed the resentment of their people. Free governments will fight terrorists, instead of harboring them, and that helps keep America more secure and the world more peaceful. Our mission and goals in Afghanistan and Iraq are clear: We will help new leaders train their armies so the Iraq and the Afghan people can defend the freedom within their borders. We will get them on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

At bases across the country, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country. I've seen their decency and unselfish courage. I assure you, the cause of freedom is in really good hands. I am proud of our military. They deserve—and I want to thank the vets who are here today for having set such a great example for those who wear our uniform.

I made a commitment to our troops and their loved ones, they'll have all the resources they need to do their jobs. That's why I submitted a supplemental funding request to the Congress last September for $87 billion, money needed for fuel and spare parts and body armor and equipment, ammunition, hazard pay, health benefits, to support our troops in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, see. And that proposal received bipartisan support, strong bipartisan support, except for 12 Members from the United States Senate who voted against the funding.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As a matter of fact, only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against the funding for our troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Two of those four are my runningmate and his opponent.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him how could he have done that. He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." Now, we've got some motorcycle drivers here? [*Applause*] Yes. I suspect you guys don't talk that way. They pressed him further, he said he was proud of his vote, and then he just said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter"—his words. Here are my words: There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We'll continue to work with nations around the world. We have some 40 nations in Afghanistan, nearly 30 in Iraq. These are strong, fine allies, who are making the same sacrifices we are to send their troops to secure the world and make the world more free. During the next 4 years, I'll continue to build alliances and work with our friends. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom. I believe that America is called to lead the cause of freedom. You know, I spend time with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. He's a friend. Not all that long ago, though, his country was at war with us. Matter of fact, my dad, I'm sure your dad or granddad fought a bloody war against the Japanese. But because my predecessor Harry Truman and others believed in the power of liberty to transform lives and nations, after World War II, we worked with Japan to develop a democracy, and today I sit down at the same table with Prime Minister Koizumi to discuss the peace.

Liberty can change nations from enemies to friends. Liberty will change—liberty will help transform Iraq from tyranny to a free and just society. Some day an American leader will be sitting down at the table with an elected Iraqi leader, saying thank goodness this generation of Americans had great faith in the value of liberty, and they will be discussing the peace. I believe this because I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

With the right leadership, this young century will be liberty's century. It will be a century of freedom. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we will build a safer world and a more hopeful America.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. See, there are quiet times in the life of nation when little is expected of its leader. This is not one of those times. This is times where we need firm resolve and great faith in the values that make us a wonderful country.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. As I mentioned last night, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats there, yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I was thanking—I was trying to thank people as best as I possibly could. I guy grabbed me by the arm. He looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Every day I wake up thinking about how better to protect America. I will never relent in defending our country, whatever it takes.

I am so proud so many came out today. Laura and I thank you for coming. When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made this pledge, that if you honored me with the great responsibility of serving the American people, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected.

With your help, with your hard work, we will do so for the next 4 years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at Lackawanna County Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to former Lt. Gov. Bill Scranton of Pennsylvania; country music entertainer Mark Chesnutt; and Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks in West Allis, Wisconsin

September 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. That's what I'm here to tell you. I've got the vision, the desire to lead this country for 4 more years. I want to thank you all for coming. Before I thank you for the work you're going to do and before I talk to you about why I want to be your President for 4 more years, I do want to address several situations in the news that call for our concern and prayers.

En route here we just received news that President Clinton has been hospitalized in New York. He is in our thoughts and prayers. We send him our best wishes for a swift and speedy recovery.

In Florida, our citizens are bracing for yet another hurricane. Many people there are being displaced from their homes. The Federal Government stands ready to help the people of Florida in any way we can, and the people there need to know all America is praying for their safety.

And finally, in Russia, hundreds of agonized parents are worried about the fate of their children. This is yet another grim reminder of the lengths to which terrorists will go to threaten the civilized world. We mourn the innocent lives that have been lost. We stand with the people of Russia. We send them our prayers in this terrible situation.

And finally, I'm here to thank you for your help, thank you for registering people to vote, thank you for working hard. There is no doubt in my mind, we will carry Wisconsin and carry this country.

We love coming to Wisconsin. It's the home of some really fine people. It's a beautiful State, and you play great football. You know, it's traditional when politicians come to your State that they talk about the Packers. And I understand my opponent did it the other day, and he even mentioned the legendary stadium in Green Bay. [*Laughter*] Listen, I've got some advice for him: If someone offers you a cheesehead, don't say you want some wine. [*Laughter*] Just put it on your head and take a seat at Lambeau Field.

I'm going to give you some reasons to put me in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years. Man, she gave a great speech. You know, when I asked her to marry me, it was in Midland, Texas. She said, "I'll marry you so long as I don't ever have to give a speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay," but fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. The country got to see that she is calm, steady, compassionate, and a great First Lady.

I want to thank—the other night I had a chance to thank publicly my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's a fine man. You know, I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience, and his ability to get the job done.

I want to thank three Members of the United States Congress from Wisconsin who are here today. Jim Sensenbrenner, the chairman, is with us today—appreciate you. Tom Petri is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. And Congressman Mark Green is with us today. I appreciate you coming, Mark.

I want to thank my friend Scott Walker, who is here today. If he plays his cards right, they may just start calling him "W." I appreciate Mary Panzer and John Gard. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank the Democrats for Bush national cochairman, who is with us, Brian Lunde. You know, Brian and Zell Miller—they're leading—they're on to something. [*Laughter*] There's a lot of discerning Democrats who understand that 4 more years will make this country safer, stronger, and better.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. And this campaign welcomes all Democrats and independents. Our vision includes everybody. Our message is for every single citizen in this country.

I appreciate my friend Jim Klauser and all the grassroots activists who are here. Thanks for putting up the signs. Thanks for making the phone calls. Thanks for registering the voters, and thank you for turning out our voters, come November, to the polls.

I am honored that Greg Gracz is with us today. He is the president of the Milwaukee Professional Firefighters Association, Local 215. I received the endorsement from 215 and the firefighters. I proudly accept your support. Bradley DeBraska is with us. He is the president of the Milwaukee Police Association. I thank them for their endorsement as well. I am proud to stand with the police and firefighters of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I want to, finally, thank West Allis Central High School band. Thank you all for coming.

Listen, we're approaching an historic national election. The time for choosing is coming close. This election will come down to the records we have built, the convictions we hold, and the vision that guides us forward. I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward because I understand a Presidential contest is a contest for the future. Over the next 2 months, I will tell you where I stand. I'm going to tell you where I'm going to lead this country. I'll tell you what I believe.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors. That is why we strengthened Medicare. And one of the most important partners I had in accomplishing this political promise I made to the American people was Tommy Thompson, the great former Governor of Wisconsin. He's a good one. He's a great member of my Cabinet and a very close friend. Thanks for training him. [*Laughter*]

I believe now, and I will believe forever, in the energy and innovative spirit of the American worker, the American small-business owner, the American farmer and rancher. And that is why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation.

We have overcome a recession, corporate scandals, a terrorist attack. Our economy is growing, and it is getting stronger. This morning, we received the jobs report for August, and it shows that our economy has added 144,000 new jobs, plus revisions of upwards of 60,000 for the two previous months. We gained 22,000 manufacturing jobs last month. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.4 percent. That is nearly a full point below the rate last summer and well below the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in your great State is 4.7 percent.

By supporting our small-business owners, our entrepreneurs, and our workers, the economy of Wisconsin is strong, and it is getting stronger.

The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running with a compassionate conservative agenda that says Government should help people improve their lives, not give people orders on how to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we're going to retain the White House in November of '04.

This world of ours is changing. I want you to know I understand that. We're changing jobs. Many people have many careers and jobs during their lifetime. That's not the way it used to be. Women are now working inside the house and outside the house. The workforce is changing. And it's a time of great opportunity here in America, but Government must stand side by side with the American people during times of change.

I want you to hear this. Many of the fundamental systems of our society, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, and worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. In order to make sure that the American people have a chance to

realize their dreams, we must change these fundamental systems to enable people to better realize their own hopes and aspirations. Any plan begins with making sure this economy stays strong, and my plan does that. See, to create more jobs in America, we must have an atmosphere in which America is the best place in the world to do business.

That means we must have an energy policy in this country. I submitted a plan to the Congress 2 years ago that encouraged conservation, encouraged the development of renewable sources of energy, encouraged clean coal technology, encouraged using our resources at home more wisely. In order to keep jobs in America, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We open up our markets from goods and services from overseas. They need to open up their markets. The best trade policy is to create a level playing field, because we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, as long as the rules are fair.

To keep jobs here, we must reduce the regulations on our small businesses. We must get rid of these frivolous and junk lawsuits that are making it hard on employers. We must be wise about how we spend your money, and we must keep your taxes low. We have a difference in this campaign. My opponent already has promised $2 trillion of new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. And we've still got the rest of September and October to go. [*Laughter*] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it? How are you going to pay for all these promises?" He said, "Oh, don't worry, I'll just tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? You know how that works. The rich dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November.

One of the systems that needs to be changed is our Tax Code. It is a complicated mess. It is full of special interest loopholes. We spend about 6 billion hours to try to fill out forms. In a second term, I will call together Republicans and Democrats to reform and simplify the Federal Tax Code.

Our worker training programs need to be updated and modernized. Listen, there are new jobs being created, but oftentimes, workers don't have the skills to meet those jobs. There's a skills gap. We will close that gap by making sure the worker training programs work, by expanding access to community colleges, by giving our workers a chance to be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

In order to make sure that people realize their dreams here in America, we got to make sure our education system works well. Listen, most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college. Yet, in this country, only one in four students gets there. We can do a better job than that. We'll fund early intervention programs in high schools to make sure children don't get discouraged and fall behind. We'll place a new focus on math and science. We'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. What I'm telling you is, by raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low-and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their careers with a college diploma.

In a time of change, we must do more to make sure quality health care is available and affordable. More than one-half of the uninsured in America are small-business employees. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. In a new term, we must allow small firms to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts big companies get.

Last night I proposed new steps to encourage small businesses and employees and low-income Americans to set up health savings accounts. These accounts give workers the security of insurance against major illness, the opportunity to save tax-free for routine health expenses, and the freedom of knowing you can take your account with you whenever you change jobs. Under my plan, small businesses will receive a rebate when they contribute to their employees' health savings accounts.

I met with Judy Geiger today. She is a small-business owner. She is from Cudahy. She used to provide her employees a PPO. The rising cost of premiums made her change. Last month she signed up for a health savings account. She's saving about $300 a month on her personal premiums and

$2,000 a month on the premiums for her employees. Here's what she said. She said, "It's wonderful to have this opportunity for our people." What I'm telling you is, there are ways to hold down costs, ways to help small businesses, ways to make sure people have got insurance. And we have got a plan to do that.

A big problem in America is the frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of your medicine and running docs out of business. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

I'm for an ownership society because I know in changing times, if you own something, it brings stability to your life. You know, one of the most fantastic statistics today is the homeownership rate is at an all-time high in America. We'll continue to promote homeownership. As I said last night, there's nothing better than somebody opening their door and saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

Our retirement systems must change with the times. If you're a baby boomer, Social Security is just fine. If you're older than being a baby boomer, you're in great shape. Nothing is going to change. But if you're a younger worker, you better listen carefully to the debate in this campaign. I believe younger workers ought to be able to save some of their taxes in a personal account, a nest egg they can call their own. A clear difference in philosophy in this campaign—if you listen carefully, you'll understand my opponent is running to expand Government. We're running to expand opportunity.

In a world of change, some things don't change: the values that we try to live by, courage, compassion, reverence, and integrity; the institutions which are important to our society, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. Because family and work are sources of dignity and stability, I support welfare reform that strengthens family and requires work. I support a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We strongly support the religious charities that are providing hope to millions. Government should never discriminate against faith-based programs. We support family and marriage, which are the foundations of our society. I will continue to appoint Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorist across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our military. We're strengthening our intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

And we're working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East, because we know freedom will bring hope and peace, the peace we all want. Our strategy is working. Just remember this: Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned its attacks. Because we acted, because we were resolute and strong and firm, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorists; Saudi is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom. And more than three-quarters—three-quarters—of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been detained or killed. We have led, many have joined, and America and the world are safer.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. The toughest one of all was in Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. Remember, he subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Terrorist organizations were in and out of his country, people like Zarqawi and his network or Abu Nidal and his network. We knew his long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. And we know

that after September the 11th, this Nation must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. So I went to the United States Congress. They looked at the same intelligence I did, remembered the same history of Saddam, and they saw a threat. My opponent looked at the very same intelligence, and when asked to vote on a resolution that authorized the use of force, he voted "aye."

The last choice of the Commander in Chief is to put troops in harm's way. So I felt it was important to try diplomacy. I went to the United Nations. The United Nations looked at the same intelligence, and the United Nations Security Council resolved—unanimously resolved—that Saddam Hussein must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.

The world had spoken, but as he had for over a decade, he ignored this resolution as well as over 10 resolutions. He had no intention of listening to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, he deceived the inspectors that were going in to try to get him to adhere to the demands of the free world. We had given him a choice, a final choice. It was his decision to make, and he clearly made his decision. So I had a choice to make: Trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend the country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Because we acted, because we took action to defend ourselves, more than 50 million people have been liberated. I like to tell people these are historic times. I truly believe they are. One reason I say that is because I've seen what's happened in Afghanistan. This is a country that has gone from darkness to light, a country where the Taliban wouldn't even let young girls go to school. They'd whip their mothers in the public squares or kill them because of their beliefs. They were backward, and they were wrong. And yet today—yet today, 3 years after the liberation, 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote.

Freedom is powerful. In Iraq, there's a strong Prime Minister, a national council. National elections in that country are scheduled for January. Our strategy is clear. We will stand with the people to help them start their political process. We will train Afghan citizens and Iraqi citizens so they can defend themselves against the few who are trying to stop the march of liberty. Our troops will stay there as long as necessary to finish the mission, and they will come home with the honor they have earned.

We have a great United States military. I want to thank all the veterans who have set such a fine example for those who wear our uniform. I have made a commitment to our troops and their families. They will have all the support they need from the Federal Government to complete their mission. That is why I went to the Congress last September and asked for $87 billion of supplemental funding to support them in their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This money was for fuel and spare parts, ammunition, hazard pay, health benefits. It was a vital funding request. We got great support. As a matter of fact, all but 12 United States Senators voted to support the funding. Two of those who voted against it were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops. Two of those Senators were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him, "Why did you vote?" He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] That's what he said.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Then he said he's proud of his vote, and then he said the whole thing was a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

During the next 4 years, I'll continue to build alliances. You know, there's nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations in Iraq. I'm proud of their service to the cause of freedom and peace. We'll continue to build those alliances, but I will never

turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I've seen it happen throughout history, and so have you. We've seen nations in our own hemisphere become free nations and allies in the sake of peace. Our parents' generation saw the transformational power of liberty when, after World War II, Japan, because we believed in democracy, Japan became a friend. You know, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi and discuss North Korea and other issues, on how to keep the peace. I'm able to do so because my predecessor and other citizens of this great country believed that liberty could convert an enemy into a friend.

There was a lot of cynics and doubters in those days. You can understand why. Japan was a fierce enemy. I mean, people couldn't envision how liberty could transform a society. But there were fellow countrypeople of ours who did believe that then. And today we sit down with an enemy and talk about the peace. See, that's what's taking place. Liberty is powerful. Someday an American President is going to be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about keeping the peace, talking about—[*applause*].

A free Afghanistan and a free Iraq will set powerful examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Women who long for freedom in the Middle East will see examples of a free society in their neighborhood. Young men will realize a free society is one in which they can realize their hopes and aspirations; they don't have to strap suicide belts on. Freedom is powerful. I'll tell you why I believe so strongly in freedom. I understand it's not America's gift to the world. It's the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

I believe we're living in a century that will be called the century of liberty. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we'll build a safer world and a more hopeful America. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue to work hard for the American people to reform those institutions that need to change to make you more free. We'll spread ownership to every corner of this country. Opportunity will abound. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to a young generation. We'll be steadfast in our pursuit of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and an unshakeable belief in the values that make us a great country.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made a pledge to you. I said if I was honored to be able to hold this great office, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, for 4 more years I will continue to uphold the honor and the dignity of the White House.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:38 p.m. at the Wisconsin Exposition Center. In his remarks, he referred to Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker; Wisconsin State Senator Mary E. Panzer; Wisconsin State Representative John Gard; James R. Klauser, chair, Wisconsin Leadership Team, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Troy, OH, where he began a bus tour.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Lima, OH. Later, he traveled to Perrysburg, OH. While en route aboard the bus, he participated in an interview with Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today" show for later broadcast.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

August 29

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Wheeling, WV. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

August 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Nashua, NH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Julie Dube. He then participated in an interview with WMUR–TV.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Detroit, MI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Annie Kaigler before continuing on to Taylor, MI.

In the evening, the President traveled to Dearborn, MI.

August 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Nashville, TN, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Andrea Martin.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Des Moines, IA, where, upon arrival in the afternoon, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Amy Bickel. He then participated, by telephone, in a radio interview with Rush Limbaugh before continuing on to Alleman, IA.

In the evening, the President traveled to North Middleton Township, PA, where he participated in a family-style picnic and watched a softball game. He then made satellite remarks to the Republican National Convention in New York City. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Also in the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel R. Martinez to congratulate him on his victory in the Florida Republican Senate primary.

September 1

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia to offer his condolences and support regarding recent terrorist attacks in Russia and the continuing hostage situation at a school in Beslan, Russia. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece to congratulate him on the success and safety of the recent Olympic games in Athens, Greece. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Columbus, OH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Carol Hribar.

In the evening, the President traveled to Elmhurst, NY, where, at the Italian Charities of America, he visited with firefighters and supporters. Later, he traveled to New York City.

The President declared a major disaster in Indiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding on July 3–18.

The President declared a major disaster in South Carolina and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by Hurricane Charley on August 14–15.

September 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, at Madison Square Garden, the President attended the Republican National Convention. Later, he traveled to Wilkes-Barre, PA.

September 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Moosic, PA. Later, he traveled to Milwaukee, WI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Kathy Hawkins before continuing on to West Allis, WI.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Cedar Rapids, IA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lisa Gibney. He then made remarks at a rally.

In the evening, the President traveled to Cleveland, OH.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes associated with Tropical Depression Gaston beginning on August 30 and continuing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released August 30

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released August 31

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attacks in Russia

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attacks in Beersheva, Israel

Released September 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Indiana

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Carolina

Released September 2

Advance text: Remarks by the President at the 2004 Republican National Convention

Fact sheet: Strengthening Education and Job Training Opportunities

Fact sheet: Increasing Affordable Housing and Expanding Homeownership

Fact sheet: President Bush Proposes New "Opportunity Zones"

Fact sheet: President Bush's Plan To Make Health Care More Affordable

Released September 3

Statement by the Press Secretary on action by the Lebanese Parliament to amend its constitution to extend the term of the current President

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Virginia

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.

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